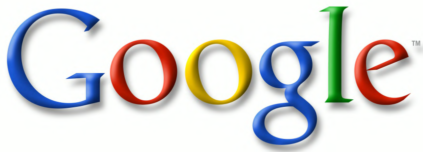

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FANTASTIC STORIES.

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Volkmann, Richard von

FANTASTIC STORIES

BY

RICHARD LEANDER, pseud.

TRANSLATED BY PAULINA B. GRANVILLE

ILLUSTRATED BY M. FRASER-TYTLER.

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PREFACE.

AS the ceaseless, dreary rain after a severe thunderstorm, when clap has succeeded clap with fearful rapidity, so, after the mighty struggles of the first weeks of the Franco-German War, followed the monotonous siege of Paris.

And like the wanderer who, during the first violence of the storm, has gladly renounced all idea of pursuing his journey, to seek shelter under some friendly roof, as the echoes of the last thunderclap die away, looking again and again from the window on the misty landscape, impatient for the rain to cease, so we waited and watched for the hour which should conduct us to our hearths and homes in the brilliant rays of the Sun of Peace.

But week after week, and month after month passed by, and no white flag appeared upon the walls of the forts.

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When the day's work was done, and the shades of evening descended upon the lovely heights crowning the city of the Seine, we sat by the lonely firesides of the deserted French villas and chateaux, and when the fire crackled and the sparks flew upward, to many of us came strange old-world thoughts. In life and in form they came from behind the dark heavy window curtains, or from out the gay many-coloured chintz hangings, and advanced close to the dreamer.

On looking wonderingly in their faces, in astonishment old acquaintances were recognised, many long, long-forgotten coming back even from childhood's days. For it is extraordinary what strange things a German soldier will dream of at French chimney-corners. *Spécialité de rêveries Allemandes. Allez donc!*

To the relater of these tales such apparitions frequently presented themselves, and now and then, when the snowflakes drifted and fell thick out of doors, he took his pen and tried to put these dream-phantoms on paper, and faithfully the Field-post carried the hasty sketches home to her to whom this book is dedicated. On returning at last to the German Fatherland, surrounded by children at his own hearth, he found with

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astonishment how the singly sent pages had gradually become a small volume.

In this form let it go out into the world, in remembrance of that great and glorious time, with which it can only claim to be connected in so far that it has grown out of love for what we struggled and fought for —love of German ways and German character, and so God bless our noble Fatherland!

RICHARD LEANDER.

LEIPZIG, *Easter Festival*, 1871.

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FANTASTIC STORIES.

THE MAGIC ORGAN.

A

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FANTASTIC STORIES.

I.

THE MAGIC ORGAN.

MANY, many years ago, there lived a very skilful organ-builder, who had built many organs, each one more perfect than the other. At last he produced an instrument so exquisitely organised that it began to play of itself whenever a bridal pair entered the church with whom Heaven was well pleased.

Now, having completed this organ, he thought he would look amongst the young girls of his native town for a wife, and having chosen the best and the fairest, he made preparations for his own wedding. As he passed into the church with his bride, followed by a long procession of friends and relatives, each with a bouquet in the hand or button-hole, his heart swelled with pride and ambition.

He thought neither of his bride nor of Heaven, but only what a clever workman he was, so clever that none could compete with him, and how all people would

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wonder and admire him when the organ began to play of itself. So he entered the church with his beautiful bride, but the organ remained silent. The organ-builder took this very much to heart; for in his pride he thought the fault lay with his bride, and that she was untrue to him. He spoke not one word to her the whole day, and when night came he made up a bundle of clothes and left her.

After wandering many hundred miles, he settled at last in a foreign country where no one knew him, or cared to inquire anything about him. He lived there a quiet lonely life for ten long years, when there came upon him an indescribable yearning for his home and his forsaken bride. He thought continually how good and beautiful she had been, and how cruelly he had deserted her. Having struggled long against the feeling, he resolved at last to return and sue for pardon. Day and night he wandered on, till the soles of his feet were quite sore; and the nearer he came to his home, the greater grew his anxiety to know if she would be kind and good and true to him, as in those days when she was his bride.

At length the distant towers of his native town rose glittering in the sunlight. Then he began to run so fast that people turned round to look after him, exclaiming, "Why, he must be mad!" or, "Perhaps he's a thief!"

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As he entered the gates of the town a funeral procession met him. The coffin was followed by many persons, all weeping bitterly. "Who are you carrying to the grave and mourning so deeply?" he said. "It is the beautiful wife of the organ-builder, who was so basely deserted by her wicked husband. She has been so good and charitable to us all! and now we follow her to her last resting-place." He listened, but never a word did he utter, as, with bent head, he slowly approached the coffin and helped to bear it. No one recognised him, but hearing his sobs, he was not disturbed, thinking him one of the many to whom in her lifetime the forsaken wife had shown kindness.

Thus the procession reached the church door, and as the bearers crossed the threshold the organ pealed forth more gloriously than it had ever been known to do before.

They placed the coffin before the altar, and the organ-builder leant silently against a pillar near, and listened to the tones, which rose and swelled more and more powerfully till the very foundations of the church seemed to tremble. Then his eyes closed, for he was very tired with the long journey; but his heart was joyful, for he knew that God had pardoned him—and as the last note of the organ died away he sank lifeless on the pavement.

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The people raised the body, and on recognising it, they opened the coffin and laid him beside his bride, and the organ began again in soft tones as they closed the coffin. Then it became silent, and since has never been known to play of itself again!

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THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM.

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II.

THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM.

ABOUT a mile or so from the village, on the hillside, stood a little house, in which dwelt, with his old father, a young man named George. They cultivated just enough land to be able to live without any anxiety. Behind the house the forest grew thick and wild with its tangled masses of verdure, and its old oaks and beeches, that were so old that even the great-grand-children of the men who had planted them had been dead many hundred years. Just on the border of the forest lay a large, half-broken millstone; and who knows how long it had lain there or who had brought it? Seated there, a lovely view stretched itself at the feet of the beholder. Far away, the eye wandered over valley and along the windings of a silvery stream, far into the mountains, which rose majestically in the distance.

Every evening George came to this spot as soon as his work in the fields was done, and sitting on the stone with his head in his hands and his elbows on his knees, he would dream on for hours forgetful of all around him. Making friends of none of the people in the village, pre-

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ferring at all times to be alone, it came to pass that he was nicknamed Dreamy George. To this he was perfectly indifferent.

The older he grew the more reserved he was, and when his old father, whom he dearly loved, came to die and be buried under one of the old oaks, he became more reserved. Seated on the millstone still oftener than before, looking into the lovely valley beneath, he would watch the evening mist enter at one end and steal up the hills, till the night grew dark. Then the stars peeped out one by one, and the moon at last, in all her grandeur, would sail upon the deep blue sky.

Then he felt peace ineffable and unspeakable happiness throughout his whole being; for the stream began to sing, softly at first, but as he listened it grew louder, and sang of the hills from whence it came, and the sea to which it was hurrying, and of the water nymphs who sported in its crystal depths. The forest would also begin to rustle, quite different from an ordinary forest, and told the most wonderful tales, particularly the old oak under which his father lay buried—that old tree knew wondrous strange things—and rustled till the very stars in the clear blue heavens were seized with a longing desire to fall into the green forest and into the cool blue stream; and began to flicker and sparkle just as if they could really bear it no longer.

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But the angels, one of whom stands behind each star, held them quite fast, exclaiming—

"Stars! stars! do not commit such folly, ye are much too old by many thousand years and more. You remain where you are and do your appointed work."

It was a wonderful valley this, but only George heard and saw all these things. The people in the village had no idea what went on, for they were only common matter-of-fact people. Now and then they came to the forest and felled one of the giant trees and split it up into firewood, making a goodly pile, when they would rub their hands and say—

"Ah! ah! now we shall have plenty of good fires."

They went also and washed their linen in the stream, and found it very handy. The stars, too, when they sparkled more than usual, only seemed to tell them it would be a cold night.

"Our potatoes will be frozen!" they exclaimed.

George sometimes tried to tell them the real meaning of what they saw and heard, but it was useless; they only laughed at him, for they were but common matter-of-fact sort of people.

One day, George, as usual, was sitting on the old millstone, thinking that in the whole wide world he was utterly alone, when he sank into a deep sleep. Then he dreamt that between two stars a golden swing with

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silver cords hung down from the sky. On this swing sat a lovely Princess swinging herself backwards and forwards, alternately touching the heavens and the earth. Each time her little feet touched the earth, the Princess clapped her hands merrily and threw him a rose. Suddenly the silver cords snapped, and swing and Princess were tossed up into the clouds. Farther and farther they sped, till at length they disappeared altogether from his sight.

He started up and looked about him. Could it be a dream? No, surely, since there, on the old millstone before him, lay a bunch of freshly-gathered roses.

The next day he went to sleep again, and again when he awoke the roses were there.

The same thing occurred the whole week. Then Dreamy George began really to think there must be some truth in his dream; so he determined to shut up his house and go in search of the Princess.

After travelling many days, he at length came to a country where the clouds touched the earth. Nothing daunted, he wandered straight into this cloud-land till he came to a thick forest. All at once he heard cries for help, and following the sounds, he came to where a venerable old man, with a long grey beard, lay helpless on the ground, and upon him knelt two hideous, quite naked wretches in the very act of strangling him.

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Looking hastily round for a weapon of some sort to run these two miscreants through, he, in despair, tore down one of the branches of a tree, when lo! it turned into a spear in his hands. With this he rushed upon the murderers and ran them through the body, so that with piercing shrieks they soon decamped, leaving their victim uninjured.

Lifting up the venerable old man and trying to comfort him, Dreamy George asked him how it was those two naked fellows had set upon him?

Then he told him how that he was the King of Dreams, and had lost his way and had wandered into the country of his bitter enemy, the King of Reality and Truth.

"No sooner," said he, "did this King of Reality and Truth discover me, than he had me watched by two of his servants, with orders to despatch me at the first best opportunity."

"Had you then offended the King of Reality and Truth?" asked Dreamy George.

"Not a bit of it," replied the other; "but he is always looking out for affronts. It's his disposition. Me he positively hates like poison."

"But the fellows he sent to kill you were—yes—they really were stark naked."

"To be sure," said the King; "stark naked—that's the fashion in the land of Truth. Every one goes about

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in that costume, even the King himself; and they're not a bit ashamed of it either, a plain, ugly, hateful people as they are. But come, you have saved my life, and I must prove my gratitude by showing you my country. It is the most enchanting in the world, and all dreams are my very humble subjects."

And so saying, the King of Dreams led the way, and George followed him. When they came to the spot where the clouds hung thickest upon the earth, the King pointed to a trap-door which was so concealed in a thicket that it would have been difficult to find for anybody who did not know where to look for it. He lifted it and appeared to descend with his companion five hundred steps, but in reality they were mounting higher and higher into the clouds, till they came to a brilliantly-illuminated grotto, which stretched for miles and miles away in marvellous beauty. Inexpressibly lovely it was, with palaces on islands in the middle of vast lakes of crystal waters, and the islands all floated about like ships, so that when one had a mind to enter a palace, he had only to stand on the shore and call out—

"Let the palace come near,
I will enter it here;"

and immediately it would obediently float up to the shore. Further on were castles in the air wafted along

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by the breeze, and if the fancy took you to pay them a visit it was only necessary to say—

> "Let the castle come near,
> I will enter it here;"

and they obligingly lowered themselves. Besides these were many other wonders equally curious and astounding. Flowers scenting the air with delicious perfume in the day, and shining with a blaze of light at night. Birds warbling strange tales, and, in fact, such extraordinary objects met his delighted gaze, that Dreamy George thought he never could grow tired of looking and wondering.

"Now for my subjects, the dreams," said the King; "come and make acquaintance with them. I divide them into three classes: good dreams for good people; bad dreams for bad people; and the third grade is composed of dream-elves, who are also called nightmares. With these last I sometimes have a good joke, for, King though I am, I must be allowed my joke sometimes." So saying, he led the way into a castle of such a peculiar style of architecture that it really seemed a joke of itself.

"Here live my dream-elves, a little wanton, mischievous community, who, however, never do any harm to any one. Come here, my little man," cried the King, "and try for once to be serious for a minute or two.

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Can you imagine," continued he to George, "what this rogue is capable of, if by chance I allow him to go down upon the earth? Why, I will tell you. He runs into the first house he comes to, picks up the soundest sleeper in his arms, and carrying him to the top of the church tower, pitches him down headlong to the bottom, and away he springs himself, two steps at a time, down the winding stairs, and arrives just so as to receive the falling wretch in his arms and carry him back to his bed, on which he throws him in such a heap as to wake him up with a great crack and a start, believing every bone in his body to be broken. Then, poor man, he rubs his eyes and exclaims gratefully, 'Thank Heaven, I am awake now! It was only a dream. I thought I had fallen from the church tower.'"

"There he is," cried Dreamy George. "There, that one. He came to me once. If I could only just catch him, he should remember it his life long."

Hardly had he said this than another nightmare jumped up from under the table, looking just like a little dog, with a coat like shaggy hair, and his tongue hanging half out of his mouth.

"And he's not much better," assured the King; "he barks like a dog, and has such strength that when people are very frightened in their dreams he hangs on to their feet and legs, so that they cannot run away."

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"Yes! I know that fellow well, too," cried George. "One tries to move and can't, feeling as powerless as a log! Only just to lift an arm, but it is as heavy as lead, and your legs seem glued to the very earth. Sometimes, instead of a dog, the fellow looks like a bear or a robber, or something even worse still."

"He sha'n't worry you again, Dreamy George," said the King. "Now we will go on to the bad dreams; but don't be afraid, not one shall hurt you, they are only for wicked men."

Whereupon they entered a large space enclosed by a high wall, in the centre of which was a strong iron door. Here, up and down, wandered the most appalling monsters, some in the form of man, some half man and half beast, others like animals only. Quite unprepared for such apparitions, Dreamy George drew back towards the iron door, but the King spoke encouragingly to him and said, "Would you not like to see a little closer the sort of dreams wicked men are compelled to dream?" And he beckoned to a dream that stood hard by—a most hideous giant with a grindstone under each arm.

"Tell us what you mean to be about to-night," said the King in an authoritative tone.

The monster drew his head almost into his shoulders, and his mouth nearly to each ear, shaking his sides like one who enjoys a good joke.

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"I am going to a rich man to-night who let his father starve. One day the old man seated himself on the stone steps of his son's house, begging, if only for a bit of bread. When the son came out of his house, seeing him there, he ordered his servants to drive him off, saying, 'Away with such a disgrace to my house!' So every night I go and roll him well between my two grindstones, till every bone in his body is well broken up into little bits; and as soon as he has become nice and limp, then I take him by the throat and give him a good shaking and say, 'Now then, my man, how do you like it yourself?' Then he starts up, his teeth chattering, and he calls out to his servants to bring him another blanket, 'I am frozen!' and as soon as he is sound asleep then I begin again."

Dreamy George could bear this no longer, but slipping out of the iron door, he dragged the King after him, calling out he had had quite enough of the bad dreams, and would not stay a minute longer amongst them. It was too horrible.

Then the King led the way to an enchanting garden, into which they entered. The paths were all silver, the beds gold, and the flowers precious stones, and amongst them walked the good dreams. The first he met was a dream like a fair but very pale young woman, who held in one hand a Noah's ark, and in the other a box of tricks.

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"Who may she be?" asked Dreamy George.

"She is a sweet dream, who goes every evening to the bedside of a little sick child whose mother is dead; during the day he is quite alone, for no one cares very much about him; but towards evening she goes to him and plays with him the whole night. He always goes to sleep early, so she is obliged to be early too. The other dreams are much later. But come, we must get on if I am to show you all."

And so they went farther into the garden, into the very midst of the dreams. They were men, women, and children, all with good, pleasant faces, and dressed in the most superb clothes; many of them held beautiful presents in their hands of all that could most delight the eyes or gratify the heart. Suddenly Dreamy George stood still with a cry of astonishment, that made all the dreams turn round to see what was the matter.

"What is it?" asked the King.

"Why, my Princess, there she is! who so often came to me, and gave me the roses," cried Dreamy George, in a state of enchantment.

"To be sure! to be sure!" replied his guide, "that is undoubtedly she. I always sent you a beautiful dream, almost the most beautiful I have."

Dreamy George ran up to the Princess, who had just

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got into her little golden swing, and had begun to swing herself backwards and forwards, when she caught sight of George, and sprang from her seat almost into his arms; but he, taking her by the hand, led her to a golden bench. Here they both sat down, and told each other how delightful it was to meet again; and when they had quite ended that topic of conversation, they began it all over again. Meanwhile, the King of Dreams paced backwards and forwards along the broadest path, with his hands behind his back, quietly taking out his watch now and then, to see how late it grew, and still Dreamy George and the Princess seemed not to be a bit nearer the end of whatever they could be telling each other. At last, almost out of patience, he went up to them.

"Now, really, my dear children, it is quite time you should have done. You, Dreamy George, have a long way to go before you reach home, and I can't offer you a bed, for we have none here; dreams never sleep, but go down every night to mortals on earth; and you, my fair Princess, must now be quick and dress yourself in rosy hues, and come to me, and I will tell you where to go to-night, and what you have to say."

"Never more!" cried Dreamy George, with a beating heart, and more courage than he had ever felt in his whole life. "Never more, your Majesty, will I be

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parted from my Princess; either keep me here altogether, or give her to me to take back with me to earth. I cannot live without her, I love her far too dearly." And a tear stood in each eye as big as a hazel-nut.

"My good George," began the King, "she is my very sweetest dream." But the recollection of how he had saved his life came across him, and he added, "Well, I suppose you must have her; I can't refuse. There, take your Princess, go down to earth with her, but as soon as you arrive, loose her silver veil from her head, and throw it back to me through the trap-door; then she will become flesh and blood like any other mortal maid, for now she is but a dream."

Dreamy George could not find words enough to thank the King. "Your Majesty overwhelms me, but since you are so obliging, may I venture to add one more petition. My Princess, it is true, is now mine. But, alas! where is my kingdom? It is quite impossible to be a princess without a kingdom; at least, a reigning princess, such as mine is. Could your Majesty not vouchsafe to bestow a kingdom on us, if only a little one?"

"Visible kingdoms, Dreamy George, I have none to give," replied the King; "mine are all invisible, and one of these I can give you; the very best and most extensive I have shall be yours if you only wish it."

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Then Dreamy George asked "how he should find out what to do with an invisible kingdom, and how it should be governed?"

But the King assured him he would soon find it all out, and live in an invisible kingdom of wonders and delights. For, said he, endless and unclouded happiness belongs to such a kingdom, whilst ordinary visible kingdoms sometimes have very unpleasant events happening in them every day.

"If you were king of one of those realms, one fine morning your Minister of Finance might come perhaps to your bedside with, 'May it please your Majesty, I must have a thousand pounds for the State; there is not a farthing in the treasury.' What would become of you then? Or again, war is declared, and you are conquered by some neighbouring king, who marries your Princess, and shuts you up in a prison. Believe me, such events never happen in invisible kingdoms."

"Still if we can't see it," persisted Dreamy George, "where would be the good of our kingdom?"

"What a strange mortal it is!" murmured the King, with his forefinger to his forehead. "Why, you and your Princess would see it, to be sure, clear enough. Palaces, gardens, parks, and forests, all that belongs to a kingdom you will see, and live and walk in, and do

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just as you please with—of course only other people won't see it, that 's all."

Dreamy George was relieved, for after making the request he began to feel just a little afraid of what people in the village might say if he came home with a princess and became king; so he took an affectionate farewell of the King of Dreams, and with his Princess mounted the five hundred steps which really led down upon the earth, and when he had reached the top, he unfastened her silver veil and threw it through the trap-door. Then he tried to shut it, but it was so heavy he let it fall with such a bang it almost sounded like a cannonade, and for a few minutes he was quite stunned. When he recovered his senses he found himself sitting on the old millstone, near his home, and by his side the Princess, of flesh and blood, like any other mortal maid. She held his hand between her own, saying in a low but happy tone—

"You dear, good, foolish husband, what a long time it was before you had the courage to tell me how much you loved me! Did I alarm you so very much?"

And then the moon rose and lighted up the stream that murmured sweet music to the ear as it rolled along, and the old trees rustled, and still they sat and chatted on. All at once a little black speck, like a cloud,

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obscured the moon, and something fell at their feet like a folded handkerchief. Then the moon shone forth again in all her glory; they picked up the handkerchief and began to spread it before them, but it was so thin, and went into so many folds, it took some time; at last, when it was quite undone, they saw it was a map of a fair country; a river ran in the centre, and on either side were towns, and forests, and lakes. Then they knew the good King of Dreams had fulfilled his promise, and sent them their invisible kingdom from heaven, and when they turned to look at their house, behold! it had become a noble palace, with steps of crystal, walls of marble, and soft velvet carpets. Holding each other by the hand they entered their palace, where their subjects were already assembled to receive them. Low they bowed as they passed along, whilst the air was rent with the sounds of drums and trumpets. Then came pages and strewed bright flowers before them, and so they knew they were King and Queen.

The next morning the whole village was alive with the news that Dreamy George had come home, and brought a wife back with him. "Nothing very particular," said the good folks. "I saw her this morning," chimed in one of the villagers; "as I went to the wood, she was standing with him at the door, quite a plain girl, little, and rather pale, in just a simple cotton dress.

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I wonder where she sprang from? He hasn't much himself, and I daresay she has nothing at all."

And so these very foolish people gossiped on, for they could not see she was a princess, or that the cottage had become a palace of marvellous beauty. They in their ignorance saw nothing, for Heaven had sent Dreamy George an invisible kingdom. He never cared anything at all about these silly people, but lived with his Princess contented and happy. By and by they had six children, one more beautiful than the other, and they were all princes and princesses.

But nobody knew it in the village, for they really were such stupid matter-of-fact sort of people that they never discovered it at all.

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THE KNIGHT WHO GREW RUSTY.

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III.

THE KNIGHT WHO GREW RUSTY.

A VERY rich and noble knight lived in riot and revelry, and was proud and hard to the poor. Therefore, as a punishment, God let one side of him grow rusty. His left arm, his left leg, and indeed one half of his body rusted, except his face, which remained as it had been. So the knight drew a glove on his left hand, had it sewn at the wrist, and did not take it off day or night, so that no one might see how very rusty he was.

Then he resolved to try and lead a new life. He dismissed his old friends and boon companions, and married a beautiful and religious wife. She had probably heard much evil of the knight; but as his face remained quite free from rust, she only half believed the reports when she was alone and thought about what she had been told. When he was with her, and spoke softly to her, she believed not one word, so she accepted him.

Soon after the wedding, she found out why he never took off the glove from his left hand, and a great fear

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fell upon her. She did not, however, let this appear; but one morning said to her husband, she would go into the forest to pray, in the little chapel that had been built there. Now near this chapel, in a cell, there dwelt an old hermit, who in former days had spent much time at Jerusalem, and was so holy that from far and near people made long pilgrimages to see him. She thought she would consult him, and follow his advice.

Having told her tale, the hermit went into the chapel and prayed long and earnestly. When he returned he said to her, "My child, you may indeed release your husband from this curse, but under great difficulties. Should you begin your task, and not have the courage to complete it, you too will grow rusty. Now listen to the conditions. Your husband has done much evil in his time, and has been proud and hard to the poor. If you will beg for him, barefooted and in rags, as the poorest beggar-woman, until you have collected a hundred golden guineas, then take his hand, go with him to the church, and lay the hundred guineas in the poor-box, then God will pardon your husband's sins, the rust will disappear, and he will be as white as ever."

"I will do it," said the knight's young wife; "however difficult it may be, and whatever time it may take, I will do it! I will save my husband; for firmly I believe the rust is only outside."

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Deep into the forest, far away she wandered, and at length came upon an old woman gathering sticks. She wore a dirty torn petticoat, and over it a cloak made up of as many shreds as the Holy Roman Empire in former days. What colour the rags had once been it was impossible to say; for rain and sun had done their work, and not a vestige remained.

"Will you give me your petticoat and your cloak, good mother?" said the knight's wife. "I will give you all the money in my pocket, and my silk dress too, if you will, for I want to be very poor."

The old woman looked at her in utter amazement, and said, "With pleasure, my pretty one; if you are in earnest, I will gladly do it. I have seen much of the world, and met many people who wanted to be rich, but I never yet came across any one who wanted to be poor. Poverty will ill suit those soft white hands and that sweet little face of yours."

But the knight's wife had already begun to take off her dress, and looked so sad and serious that the old woman easily saw she was not joking. So she gave her her petticoat and her cloak, and helped her to put them on; then she asked—

"What do you mean to do now, my pretty one?"

"To beg, good mother," answered the knight's wife.

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"To beg! Well, don't grieve about that, it is no shame. Many a one will have to beg at the gates of heaven, who has not learned to do so on earth. Listen, I will teach you a beggar's ditty:—

"'Pity, poor beggars, have pity!
We wander from city to city,
Begging and crying,
Fainting and dying.

"'Plenty hast thou. Oh! that rarity!
Give us a morsel for charity—
Bread for the wallet,
Soup for the palate.

"'Our knapsacks are leather,
Our clothes like a feather;
Nothing to wear,
Nothing for fare.

"'We beg as we wander,
And what we get squander.'

Isn't that a pretty song?" said the old woman. Thereupon she put on the silk dress, and disappeared quickly.

The knight's wife went on still further into the forest, and after a time she met a farmer who had come out to hire a gleaner, for it was harvest-time, and hands were wanted. Then the knight's wife stood still and held out her hand, saying—

"Pity, O good sir, have pity;
Give me a morsel for charity."

But the other verses she did not like, so she would not

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repeat them. The farmer looked at the woman, and seeing that in spite of her rags she seemed strong and healthy, he asked her if she wanted work?

"I'll give you a cake at Easter, a goose at Michaelmas, and a crown and a smart new dress at Christmas. Will these wages content you?"

"No," answered the knight's wife; "I must beg: such is God's will."

Upon which the farmer grew angry, and began to abuse and swear at her, saying, jeeringly, "And so it's God's will, is it, indeed? much you must know about that! An idle hussy is what you are, and not so much as worthy a jail;" and he went on his way and gave her nothing, leaving her standing by the roadside. Then the knight's wife began to discover that begging was a hard task. However, she proceeded, and after some time came to a place where the road divided, and where stood two stones. On one of these sat a beggar, with a crutch in his hand. The other was vacant; and as she was now beginning to be very tired, she thought she would sit down and rest a while. Hardly, however, had she done so, when the beggar, hitting out at her with his crutch, exclaimed—

"You be off, you lazy wench! Do you suppose you are going to cheat me out of my customers, with your rags and your sugary face? I have hired this corner for

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myself; and you be quick and pack, or I'll soon show you what a rod in pickle I have here for your back."

So the knight's wife rose, and walked as far as her feet would carry her, till she at length came to a great strange city. Here she remained, and making her way to the church door, she sat down and begged, sleeping at night on the church steps. In this manner she lived from day to day, one giving her a penny, and another a farthing, whilst from many she got nothing but abuse, such as the farmer had given her.

She seemed a long way from the hundred golden guineas, for after begging well-nigh three parts of the year she had only saved a shilling! And just as she had done this a lovely boy was born to her, whom she named "Joie," because she still hoped to be able to redeem her husband from the curse.

She tore a strip about a yard wide from the faded cloak, so that it then only reached to her knees; in this she wrapped the child, laid it on her lap, and continued begging. And when the child was restless and would not sleep, she rocked it in her arms, singing—

"Sleep, baby, on thy mother's breast,
Poor beggar child, and take thy rest;
Thy father in his castle lives,
And while he revels, inly grieves.

"Sleep on: he softly walks in silk,
Eats wheaten bread, drinks wine and milk;

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A storm without affrights his heart,
And asks, 'Dost play a father's part?'

"Sleep on: for me or thee in vain
He weeps in secret, racks his brain;
With all his wealth, far poorer he,
Till he recover thee and me."

Often would the passers-by stand and look pityingly on the poor young beggar-woman and her beautiful child, and they began to give her more money than before; and this consoled her, and she wept no more, for she knew if only she had the patience to wait, she would surely save her husband at last.

In the meantime, when the knight found his wife did not return to the castle, he grew very sad, and said to himself, "She has found out all, and left me!" Then he remembered the hermit in the forest, and betook himself at once to the chapel to learn if his wife had been there to pray; but the hermit mistrusted him, and only gave him very short answers, and saying sternly—

"You have lived in riot and revelry, you have been hard and proud to the poor; therefore, as a punishment, God has allowed you to grow rusty. Your wife was quite right to leave you. No one should put a good and a bad apple in the same box, lest the good one should become rotten also!"

Then the knight sat himself down on the ground and wept bitterly.

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The hermit, seeing this, said—

"I perceive your heart as yet has not grown rusty, so I will give you this piece of advice: give alms to the poor, and pray without ceasing, go diligently to church, and you shall find your wife."

So the knight left his castle and rode forth into the world, giving money to all the poor he met, and praying in every church he came to; but he did not find his wife. Thus a year had nearly passed, when he reached the town in which his wife sat at the church door begging. His first thought was to go as usual to church.

She from afar had already recognised him, for he was tall and stately, and moreover wore a helmet of gold with an eagle's claw on the crest, which glittered in the distance; but she trembled as she saw him approach, for as yet she had only collected two golden guineas, and she knew with these she could never save him.

She drew her mantle far over her head, so that he should not see her face, and crouched down as much as possible, to hide her snow-white feet; for the cloak only just reached to her knees, since she had torn off the strip for the baby. As the knight stepped past her, he heard a gentle sob, and seeing the patched cloak, and the beautiful child on her lap, his heart melted towards

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her. He drew near, and asked what he could do for her, but the woman did not answer, and only sobbed the louder, for do what she would, she could not control herself.

Then the knight taking out his purse, which contained more than a hundred golden guineas, he emptied them into her lap, saying, "All that I have shall be yours, even though I should have to beg my way home." At this moment the woman's cloak accidentally slipped from her head, and the knight knew it was his own wedded wife to whom he had given his purse of gold. In spite of her rags, he clasped her in his arms; and on learning the beautiful child was his own son, he kissed and caressed him in boundless delight. But the woman, taking the knight by the hand, led him into the church, and putting the money into the poor-box, she said, "I wished to release you from the curse, but you have released yourself. My task is done." And it was so; for as the knight left the church, the curse was removed from him, and the rust which had covered his left side totally disappeared. He lifted his wife and child on to his horse, and walking himself by their side, brought them safe back to the castle, where they all lived happily for many years, the knight doing so much good that everybody was loud in his praise.

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The rags his wife had worn he placed in a costly shrine, and if, as he passed it on his way each morning to chapel, his first thanksgivings were said at this shrine, "surely," he thought, "God, who knows all hearts, will pardon me."

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THE QUEEN WHO COULD NOT MAKE GINGERBREAD-NUTS, AND THE KING WHO COULD NOT PLAY ON THE JEWS'-HARP.

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IV.

THE QUEEN WHO COULD NOT MAKE GINGERBREAD-NUTS, AND THE KING WHO COULD NOT PLAY ON THE JEWS'-HARP.

THE King of Macaroons had already reached man's estate, when one morning he sat in his dressing-gown by his bedside. His chamberlain stood before him holding his majesty's stocking, in the heel of which there was one unmistakable hole. For although he had managed to hold the stocking in such a manner as to hide the rent a little, knowing that the king generally thought much more of irreproachable boots than of new stockings, this time it did not escape the royal scrutiny. Horrified, he seized the stocking from the minister's hand, and running his forefinger through the hole till the very knuckle was visible, he sighed—

"Alas! what use is it that I am a king, if I have no queen! What should you say to my taking a wife?"

"Your majesty," answered the minister, "that is a sublime idea!—an idea I was on the point of having

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myself, had I not felt convinced your majesty would give utterance to the thought this day."

"Good!" replied the king; "but do you think a wife is easily found—one, I mean, just to suit me?"

"Bah!" said the minister, "ten for one!"

"But, you must remember, I am very particular. If a princess wishes to please me, she must be clever and beautiful; and there is one point on which I am inflexible. You are aware how much I like gingerbread-nuts. In the length and breadth of my kingdom there is not a soul who knows how to make them—at least, to make them properly—neither too hard nor too soft, but just nice and crisp. My queen must positively know how to make gingerbread-nuts."

No sooner were these words spoken than the minister felt electrified; but he soon recovered himself, and answered—

"A sovereign like your majesty can hardly fail to find a princess who knows how to make gingerbread-nuts."

"Well, then, we will look about us." And accordingly, that very day, the king, accompanied by his minister, went round the neighbourhood, paying visits to all the neighbours he knew had princesses to dispose of. But it so happened that amongst them all were only three who were clever and beautiful enough to please the

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king, and of these three not one could make ginger-bread-nuts.

"I am afraid I cannot make gingerbread-nuts," said the first princess; "but I know how to make the most delicious little almond-cakes, if that will do as well."

"No, no," persisted the king. "Nothing but ginger-bread-nuts!"

The second princess, when the question was put to her, only bit her lips and turned scornfully away, exclaiming, "None of your jokes, if you please. Do you think princesses make gingerbread-nuts?"

But the king fared worst of all with the third, though she was quite the cleverest and prettiest. She did not even allow him to put the question to her at all; for before he had time to speak, she asked him at once herself if he knew how to play on the Jews'-harp, and as he declared his utter inability to perform on that instrument, she at once declined the honour of his alliance, saying she regretted extremely, for he really would otherwise quite suit her; but she was passionately fond of listening to the Jews'-harp, and had determined never to marry a man who could not play upon it.

So the king drove home again with his minister, both rather crestfallen; and as he got out of the carriage he only said, "Well, that was a useless journey!"

But a king must have a queen; and so, after some

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little time, he called his minister again, and confided to him that, after mature consideration, he had come to the conclusion to give up all idea of finding a wife who could make gingerbread-nuts, and had determined upon marrying one of the three princesses they had seen. "That one who could make almond-cakes;—off with you at once and ask her to be my wife."

Next day the minister returned with the news that the princess was gone. She had married the king of the land where the capers grow.

"Then go and ask the second princess." But again the minister returned after a fruitless errand. The old king, her father, was grieved to the heart, but his daughter, unfortunately, was dead; so he was obliged to come back without her.

Whereupon the king again meditated a long time, but as a queen he would have, he ordered his minister to try the third princess. "Perhaps she might in the meantime have changed her mind." So the minister had nothing to do but to obey, though he was not much inclined, and, moreover, his own wife declared it was perfect waste of time. The king awaited his return with considerable impatience, for he remembered the question about the Jews'-harp with many misgivings. However, the third princess received the minister quite affably; she said it was undoubtedly true, she always

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had determined never to marry a man who was not thorough master of the Jews'-harp. But dreams were, after all, mere illusions, particularly the dreams of youth. She began to see her aspirations would never be realised; therefore, as the king otherwise pleased her, she consented to become his wife.

Away flew the overjoyed minister as fast as four horses could take him. The king embraced him, and graciously conferred on him the grand order of the donkey's head with ears, the order to be worn on his neck, the ears still higher. Bright flags were hung out from every window in the town, and garlands from house to house across the streets, and the wedding was celebrated in such style that nobody spoke of anything else for a fortnight.

The young king and queen lived in the greatest happiness a whole year long. The king had quite forgotten the gingerbread-nuts, and the queen the Jews'-harp.

One day, however, the king got out of bed with the left foot first, and everything went wrong. It rained all day, the sceptre fell down, and the little cross at the top broke sharp off. Then the royal court landscape-painter brought a map of the kingdom, and the moment the king's eyes fell upon it, he discovered the frontier lines had all been painted red instead of blue, as he had ordered; and, last of all, the queen had a headache.

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So it came to pass that, for the first time, the young couple had a quarrel. Why, they really, neither of them, could tell the next morning, or, at least, they did not choose to recollect. The long and the short of it was, the king was growling, and the queen snappish and determined to have the last word. After they had gone on teasing each other a long time, the queen said, with a contemptuous shrug of her white shoulders, "I should really think you had better hold your tongue and cease finding fault with everything. Why, you can't even play the Jews'-harp!" But no sooner had the words escaped her than she wished them unsaid, for the king only made this stinging answer, "And don't forget you cannot make gingerbread-nuts!"

For the first time the queen had nothing to say; and both soon withdrew into their own apartments without another word. The queen, once alone, threw herself on the cushions of her sofa, and had a good cry. "What a goose I have been! What could I have been thinking of to make such a foolish speech?"

The king, on his side, however, paced up and down, rubbing his hands in high glee, exclaiming, "What luck for me, my wife can't make gingerbread-nuts! I wonder what in the world I should have answered when she reproached me with not playing the Jews'-harp?"

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And after repeating this three or four times over, he became more and more delighted, and began to whistle his favourite melody, gazing on the full-length portrait of the queen which hung before him. Then he discovered a spider busy in darkening the queen's charming nose; and, jumping on a chair with a silk handkerchief, cried, as he carefully dislodged the insect, "My dear little wife, hasn't she been fretting and crying her pretty eyes out? I think I'll just go and see what she's about."

And so saying, he opened the door and went out into the long gallery, on which their rooms opened. But as everything had gone wrong on that day, the groom of the chambers had forgotten to light the lamps, though it was past eight o'clock and pitch dark, so the king had to feel his way along the wall; suddenly, he took hold of something soft.

"Who's there?" asked he.

"'Tis I," replied the queen.

"What do you want, my darling?"

"I want to ask you to forgive me for hurting your feelings so," answered the queen. "You" ——

"You need not do that," said the king embracing her. "I was more to blame than you, and I have, besides, forgotten it all. But I tell you what we will do: we will

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banish two words from our kingdom, under pain of death, and those are, Jews'-harp, and "——

"Gingerbread-nuts," interrupted the queen, laughing low, whilst she slily wiped a tear or two from her eyes. And so my story ends.

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THE WISHING-RING.

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V.

THE WISHING-RING.

A YOUNG farmer, whose farming did not prosper particularly well, was sitting resting on his plough for a moment as he wiped his brow, when an old witch crept up to him and said, "Why do you toil so hard, and all for nothing? Walk straight before you for two days, and you will come to a large fir-tree, which stands alone, towering over all the other trees of the forest. If you can but fell it, your fortune is made."

The farmer did not wait to be told twice, but, taking his axe on his shoulder, started on his way. After walking two days, he came to the fir-tree, and immediately set to work to fell it. Soon it toppled and crashed to the earth, when from the top branches dropped a nest containing two eggs. The eggs rolled on the ground and broke; as they broke, forth came a young eaglet from one, and a small golden ring from the other. The eaglet grew visibly, till it reached half the height of a man, shook its wings, as if to try them, raised itself from the ground, and then cried, "You have released me! as token of my gratitude, take the ring the other egg con-

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tained—it is a wishing-ring. Turn it on your finger, speak your wish aloud, and it will immediately be granted. But the ring has only one wish; when that is accomplished, it will lose all power and become no more than any other ring. Therefore reflect well on what you wish for, so that you may not have to repent afterwards."

Having so spoken, the eagle rose high into the air, swept, for some time, in wide circles over the farmer's head, and then, like an arrow from a bow, shot swiftly towards the east. The farmer took the ring, put it on his finger, and started homeward. Towards evening he reached a town. At the door of his shop a goldsmith stood who had many valuable rings for sale. The farmer showed him his ring, and asked him what was about the value of it.

"Mere trumpery," answered the goldsmith. The farmer laughed heartily, telling the man it was a wishing-ring, and of more value than all the rings in his shop put together. Now the goldsmith was a false, designing man, so he invited the farmer to stay all night at his house, saying, "It must bring one good-luck to entertain a man who is the possessor of such a precious jewel, so pray remain with me." He accordingly entertained him well with plenty of wine and civil words, but when he went to sleep at night, he drew his ring stealthily from his finger, and put on it instead a com-

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mon ring quite like it in appearance. The next morning the goldsmith could hardly wait, with any degree of patience, till the farmer had taken his departure. He awoke him in the early dawn, saying, "You have so far to go, you had better start early." As soon as the farmer was safe on his journey, the goldsmith went into his room, and having shut the shutters that no one might see, he bolted himself in, and standing in the middle of the room, and turning the ring on his finger, exclaimed—

"I wish to have a hundred thousand silver crowns immediately!"

Hardly were the words spoken, when bright five-shilling pieces began to rain down from the ceiling; shining silver crowns poured down so fast and hard that at last they began to beat him unmercifully about the head and shoulders and arms. Calling piteously for help, he tried to rush to the door, but before he could reach it and unbolt it, he fell bleeding to the ground. Still the rain of silver crowns did not cease, and soon, under the weight of it, the flooring gave way, and the unfortunate goldsmith and his money fell down into a deep cellar. And still it rained on till the hundred thousand silver crowns were completed, and then the goldsmith lay dead in his cellar, with the mass of money upon him. Attracted at last by the noise, the neighbours rushed to

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the spot, and on finding the goldsmith dead under his money, exclaimed, "It really is a great misfortune when blessings rain down like cudgels." Then the heirs came and divided the spoil.

Meantime the farmer went happily home, and showed the ring to his wife.

"We shall now never want for anything, dear wife," he said; "our fortune is made. But we must consider well what we must wish for."

The wife had a bright idea ready at hand.

"Let us wish ourselves some more land," said she; "we have so little. There is just a nice strip which stretches into our field. Let us wish for that."

"That would never be worth while," replied the husband; "we have only to work well for a year, and have a moderate share of good-luck, and we can buy it for ourselves."

And the man and his wife worked hard for a whole year, and the harvest had never been so plentiful as that autumn, so they were not only able to buy the strip of land, but had money to spare.

"You see," said the husband, "the land is ours and the wish too."

Then the good woman thought it would be a capital thing to wish themselves a cow and a horse.

"Wife," answered the husband, again clinking the

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surplus money in his pocket; "it would be folly to sacrifice our wish for such a trumpery thing. We can get the cow and the horse without that."

And sure enough, in another year's time, the horse and the cow had been well earned. So the man rubbed his hands cheerfully, and said—

"Another year has passed, and still the wish is ours, and yet we have all we want; what good-luck we have!"

The wife, however, began to be very impatient, and tried seriously to induce her husband to wish for something.

"You are not like your old self," she said crossly; "formerly, you were always grumbling and complaining, and wishing for all sorts of things; and now, when you might have whatever you want, you toil and work like a slave, are pleased with everything, and let your best years slip by. You might be king, emperor, duke, a great rich farmer with loads of money, but no—you can't make up your mind what to choose."

"Pray do cease continually worrying and teasing me," cried the farmer; "we are both of us young, and life is long. The ring contains but one wish, and that must not be squandered. Who knows what may happen to us, when we might really need the ring? Do we want for anything now? Since the ring has been ours, have we not so risen in the world that all men marvel at us?

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So do be sensible, and amuse yourself, if you like, by thinking what we shall wish for."

And so the matter was allowed to rest for the present. It really seemed as if the ring brought blessings on the house, for barns and granaries grew fuller and fuller from year to year; and in the course of time the poor farmer became a rich and prosperous one. He worked all day with his men as if the whole world depended upon it; but in the evening, when the vesper bell sounded, he was always to be seen sitting, contented and well-to-do, at his threshold, to be wished "Good-evening" by the passers-by.

Now and then, when they were quite alone, and no one near to hear, the woman still reminded her husband of the ring, and made all sorts of propositions to him. He always answered there was time enough to think about it, and that the best ideas always occurred to one last. So she gradually fell into the way of mentioning it less often, and at last it rarely happened that the ring was ever alluded to at all. The farmer, it is true, turned the ring on his finger twenty times a day and examined it closely, but he took good care never to express the slightest wish at the time.

And so thirty and forty years went by, and the farmer and his wife grew old and their hair snow-white, and still the wish remained unspoken. At last it pleased God to

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show them a great mercy, and He took them to Himself both in one night. Children and grandchildren stood weeping around the coffins, and as one of them tried to withdraw the ring from the dead man's finger, his eldest son said—

"Let our father take his ring to the grave. There was some mystery about it. Probably it was some love-token, for our mother often looked at the ring too; perhaps she gave it him when they both were young.

So the old farmer was buried with the ring which should have been a wishing-ring, but was not one, and yet had brought as much good-luck to the house as man could desire. For it is strange, as regards the true and the false, but a bad thing can be turned to better account in good hands than a good thing in bad.

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THE GLASS HEART.

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VI.

THE GLASS HEART.

THERE are some people whose hearts are made of glass—touch them lightly and they vibrate like silver bells, but roughly handled they break.

Once there was a royal couple who had three daughters, and all three had these glass hearts. "Dear children," said the anxious queen, "take great care of your hearts, for they are brittle ware," and accordingly they were always most careful of them. One day, however, the eldest sister was standing at the window, looking down into the garden, watching the bees and butterflies as they wandered from flower to flower amongst the lilies and roses, when all at once, as she leaned over the sill, a sharp report was heard,—her heart was broken, and she fell lifeless to the ground.

Some time after this the second daughter was drinking a cup of very hot coffee. Suddenly a soft ringing sound fell on the ear, and, as with her sister, she likewise fell to the ground, but this time not lifeless, for as her mother picked her up she saw she was not dead. There was only a crack through her heart.

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"What shall we do with our daughter now?" said the king to the queen. "It is true her heart is only cracked, but cracks increase, and her heart might come in two. We must take great care of her."

But the princess only said, "Leave me to myself, cracked glass sometimes lasts the longest."

In the meantime the youngest daughter grew up so fair and so good that princes came flocking in from all parts to ask her for their bride. The old king had, however, become wise through misfortune, and declared—

"I have only one daughter with a whole heart, but it is of glass, like her sisters'. If I must give her in marriage at all, it shall only be to he who best knows how to deal with such brittle ware; therefore, king's son though he must be, he must also be a glazier!"

Now it so happened that amongst all the young princes who had come to woo, not one had studied the glazier's art, so there was nothing for them to do but to make their bow and depart.

Amongst the noble pages in the palace was one who had almost served his time in that capacity—indeed he had only to carry the train of the youngest princess three times when he would be declared a nobleman. This done, the king congratulated him, and said—

"Now, having gained your coronet, go your way; I am much obliged to you."

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The first time, however, the young page had borne the princess's train he perceived she had indeed a right regal presence. The second time, she turned to him and said—

"Leave my train for a minute; give me your hand and lead me up this staircase—gently and respectfully, as it becomes a noble page to lead a king's daughter."

Then he remarked she had a wondrous small white hand. She also remarked something, but what it was shall be told by and by. The third and last time, she again turned to him, saying—

"How well you hold my train! Nobody has ever carried it so well before."

Then he discovered she had a soft, low voice. But he had become a nobleman, and the king congratulated him and told him he might go.

And as he went the princess stood at the garden gate and whispered—

"No one ever carried my train like you: if you only had been a glazier and a king!"

Then he replied he would do all he could to become both, and if she would only wait for him he would certainly return. Straight off he went and found a glazier.

"Glazier," said he, "do you want an apprentice?"

"Well, yes," replied the man; "but you must serve me four years. The first year you must learn to fetch

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the bread from the baker, and to wash and dress my children. The second year you must learn to stop chinks and crannies with putty; the third year to cut and place the glass, and the fourth year you will be a master glazier."

Then he asked the man if it were not possible to begin business the other way, as it would go so much faster; but he assured him respectable glaziers always began from the beginning if they wanted to be first-rate, and so he was fain to be satisfied. The first year he fetched the bread from the baker, and washed and dressed the children; the second he stopped up all the cracks in the neighbours' windows; the third he learned to cut and place the glass; and finally, the fourth year saw him a master glazier.

Then the young nobleman dressed himself again in all his fine clothes, took leave of his master, and began to consider how he should best manage to become a king. As he wandered along, sunk in deep thought, his eyes fixed upon the pavement, a man came up and asked him if he had lost anything.

"Lost," he said; "I cannot say I have, but I am nevertheless looking for something, and that is nothing more nor less than a kingdom, and if you can tell me how I can become a king, why, I shall feel very much obliged to you!"

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"Easy enough," replied the stranger; "if you had happened to be a glazier, I could tell you the way to become king."

"But a glazier is just what I am!" exclaimed the young man; "a master glazier, too!"

The other at once related to him the story of the three princesses with the hearts of glass, and how that the old king would never marry his daughter to any one but a glazier.

"At first," he said, "the conditions were he must be a glazier and a king's son; but as no one could be found with both these qualifications, the old king, like a wise man, gave in a little, provided two other conditions were fulfilled—a glazier, of course, he must be."

"And the other two are?" impatiently asked the young nobleman.

"That he should please the princess, and have hands as delicate and soft as velvet. Should, therefore, a glazier be found who has the good-luck to please the princess, and at the same time should have delicate, soft hands, the king will give him his daughter, and later, after his death, he shall be made king. Crowds of glaziers have already been to the palace, but the princess would not so much as look at one of them. They had none of them either soft, delicate hands, but great

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coarse paws, such as one might expect to belong to the generality of glaziers."

No sooner had he heard all than the young nobleman went off to the palace, asked for the king, and told him how that he had been his faithful page, and had become a glazier for love of the fair princess, adding that he should very much like to marry her, and would not at all mind becoming king after his death.

Then the king had the princess sent for, and asked her if the young nobleman pleased her, and as she recognised him at once she did not make the least difficulty on that score; so there remained but one thing more to be done, which was to ask him to draw off his gloves and show his hands. But here the princess interposed. She did not think it necessary, for she knew quite well it was all right—she had already remarked his hands when he had led her up the staircase. So both the conditions were fulfilled. The princess's husband was a glazier, and in his soft, delicate hands her heart was quite safe, and lasted whole and uninjured to her dying day.

The second sister, whose heart had so early been cracked and half broken, became the best of aunts to the many children that in time came to bless the union of the princess and the young nobleman. She taught the little princesses to read and to write, and to make

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their dolls' clothes; and she sharply scrutinised the little princes' daily bulletins to see how they behaved. When these were really very bad, she would call the offender a regular blockhead, and say—

"Now tell me, you idle prince, what you think will become of you if you go on in this way? Come, now, try and find your tongue, and tell me what you think you will be when you grow up?"

And amidst sobs and tears would come out at last, "Ki-ki-ki-ng!"

"King, indeed! High and mighty King Midias it will be then, with two long donkey-ears."

The one who had the bad report would hang his head then, and feel quite ashamed of himself.

And the princess lived to a good old age, notwithstanding her heart was cracked; and if people ever expressed astonishment, she would say—

"Hearts injured in their early days, if they do not break at once, generally last a long time."

And that is quite true with everything. For my mother has an old cream-jug—white it is, with little bunches of flowers all over it, and a crack right through ever since I can remember, and still it holds together, whilst I know my mother has bought many new cream-jugs that have all been broken directly—so many indeed, I could not count them!

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THE OLD BACHELOR.

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VII.

THE OLD BACHELOR.

THE churchyard in which the two little children were playing, of whom I am about to tell you, lay high up on a green mountain-slope. The village to which it belonged was built so high above the wooded valley that the clouds often hid it from the sight as the traveller glided past on the blue river beneath. Still the churchyard lay higher yet, so that its many black crosses seemed to rise up into the very sky. It was rather hard work for the people of the village to carry their dead up the mountain, for the road lay steep and stony till it reached the green slope where the churchyard lay. But they did it cheerfully. Mountaineers cannot bear to live in a valley, it seems to them as close and uncomfortable as a damp cellar would to us, and their dead bear it still less. They must be buried high on the tops of the mountains, so that they can look out over the country, far away into the valleys where the ships sail.

Quite in the corner of the churchyard was an old neglected grave. It was overgrown with weeds and

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hidden amongst the long grass, where grew here and there a few white and blue flowers which nobody had planted. For in that grave an old bachelor lay who had left behind him neither wife nor child, nor any one else to care about him. He had come from foreign lands, but whence no one knew. Every morning he had been in the habit of climbing to the summit of the mountain, sitting there for hours. But he had died soon, and was buried. He must certainly have had a name, but what it had been no one ever knew, not even the gravedigger. In the church register they wrote three crosses, and then "an old bachelor unknown, died on such and such a day, A.D. so and so;" and that was all.

Now certainly that was rather vague information, but the gravedigger's two little children did not mind that. They especially loved that old neglected grave in the corner of the churchyard, for they were allowed to play and trample upon it to their hearts' content, whilst they might not touch the other graves. These latter were all carefully tended, the grass fresh mown, and soft as velvet, with all sorts of beautiful flowers blooming upon them. The gravedigger had to water these every day, and fetch up water from the village well. On some of the graves there lay also wreaths and coloured ribbons.

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"Katey," said the little boy who was kneeling before the neglected grave, looking with great satisfaction at a hole he had dug in the side of it with his little hands—"Katey, our house is ready, I have paved it with coloured pebbles and strewn it with flowers. Now, I'll be father and you shall be mother!—Good-morning, mother; how are the children?"

"Hans," replied the little girl, "don't be in such a hurry, I have no children yet; just wait a minute and I'll fetch some directly." And away she ran amongst the graves and rushes, and returned with both hands full of snails.

"Now, father, I have seven children, seven beautiful snail children."

"Then let us put them to bed directly, for it is very late."

They gathered green leaves and laid them in the hole, then they placed the snails upon them and covered each with another green leaf.

"Now you be quiet, Hans; I must sing my children to sleep; I must do that all by myself. Fathers never sing, so you can go about your work the while."

So Hans ran away, and Katey sang in a soft low voice—

"'How many children have you, Mrs Snail?'
'Seven children have I,

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Each one carries his house on his tail
And crawls right merrily.
Sleep, my babies, soundly sleep,
I, your mother, the vigil will keep.'"

But one of the leaves began to move, and a snail poked out its small horned head from under it. The little girl tapped it gently on the back with her finger, saying, "Take care, Gussy; you are always the naughtiest. Why, it was only this morning you would not have your hair brushed. Get into bed again this minute;" and she went on singing—

"'Sleep, my babies, soundly sleep,
I, your mother, the vigil will keep.
My seven children are all of them good,
They to heaven will go;
They never are naughty, loud, or rude,
I could not bear them so.
Sleep, my babies, soundly sleep,
I, your mother, the vigil will keep.

"'When human children are sleeping and smile,
The angels, they say, are by;
Their limbs lie closely packed under the pile,
While the angels around them fly.
Sleep, my babies, soundly sleep,
I, your mother, the vigil will keep.

Lie closely within your coseline nest,
My babies so soft and pink and white,
Who knows but the angels are watching your rest?
All nature is full of delight.
Sleep, my babies, soundly sleep,
I, your mother, the vigil will keep.'"

When she had ceased singing, the seven snails had

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fallen asleep; at any rate, they lay there quite still, and as Hans had not yet returned, the little girl ran about the churchyard, looking for more snails. She collected a number in her pinafore, and came back with them to the grave. Hans was sitting there waiting for her.

"Father," she called out to him, "I have got a hundred more children."

"Nonsense, wife," said the little boy; "a hundred children are too many. We have only one doll's plate and two dolls' spoons. How are the children to eat? Besides, no mother has a hundred children. Why, there are not even a hundred names, so how can we christen them all? Throw them away again."

"No, Hans; it's very nice to have a hundred children. I want them all."

In the meantime the gravedigger's young wife had come with two huge slices of bread-and-butter, for it was time for supper; she kissed both the children, lifted them up, and seated them on the grave, saying, "Take care not to spoil your new pinafores." And they sat there eating, as quiet as mice.

Now the old bachelor in his lonely grave had heard all that passed, for it is a time-honoured tradition that the dead hear everything that is spoken on their graves. He thought of the time when he had been a little boy. Then he had known a little girl, and they had run about

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and built houses together, and had played at husband and wife. And then he thought of a later time when the little girl had grown up and he had seen her again. But he had never met her in after-years, for he had gone his own ways, which could not have been very pleasant ways, for the more the children chattered on his grave, the more sorrowful he became. He began to weep, and when the gravedigger's wife placed the children on his grave, and they sat just upon his breast, he wept most bitterly. He tried to stretch out his arms, for it seemed to him he must press the children to his heart; but he could not do so, for did not six feet of earth lie on him? And six feet of earth are very heavy; so he wept still more, and long after the gravedigger's wife had fetched away the children to bed, he was weeping still.

When the gravedigger passed through the churchyard the next morning, he was surprised to see a spring of water flowing out of the old neglected grave. Its source was the tears which the old bachelor had shed. Slowly it trickled, sparkling down the mound, and came just out of the hole where the two children had dug their house. The gravedigger was delighted, for now he would not have to fetch the water up the steep path from the village to water his flowers. He dug a proper bed for the little stream, and hemmed it in with large stones. From that day, he watered all the graves in

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the churchyard from the new spring, and the flowers bloomed and grew better than ever. Only the old bachelor's grave he never watered, for was it not an old neglected grave that nobody cared about? In spite of this neglect, the wild mountain flowers grew on it more luxuriantly than on any other spot; and the children sat often by the stream making their little mud-pies, and swimming their paper boats.

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Sepp's Courtship. age 79.

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SEPP'S COURTSHIP.

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VIII.

SEPP'S COURTSHIP.

"TO-DAY is our Statute Fair," said an old peasant woman who had been laid up with the gout nigh upon five years, as she raised herself with difficulty and tied with trembling hands a handkerchief round her head. After taking it on and off many times, she succeeded in tying a bow in the middle of her forehead, which stood out like the wings of a windmill, and then she again repeated "To-day is our Statute Fair, Sepp; and you'll have to go alone to the dance this evening, as you did last year, and the year before, and always will, I verily believe! Didn't you promise me faithfully to take a wife this year! But I suppose it's no use! you won't marry in my day—no, nor after me neither. Ah! if your poor father had lived to see such a thing! Do you want to be for ever an old bachelor? Don't you know what all the girls sing?

"'Clipper, clapper, bachelor old,
Get to the forest and think of the cold;

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Think of the winter, how soon 'twill be here,
All you can muster your cottage to cheer.
Wood that makes ashes, and wood that makes soot,
Cut from the stock, or dug up by the root;
Get you a plenty, but mark what you choose,
And see you don't take what the beggars refuse.'"

The son timidly answered he really did not know which to choose, for all the girls in the village pleased him equally well.

"Go into the village, then," said his mother, "and look about amongst the girls you think will suit you, and come back and tell me what you found them doing." And Sepp went accordingly.

"Well," cried his mother when he returned, "how did it fare with you? Where have you been?"

"I went first to Ursula; she had just come home from church, with such a fine dress on, and a pair of new earrings."

The mother sighed, and said, "The nearer to church the farther from God! The miller doesn't hear the noise of his mill! Where, then, did you go?"

"To Kate, mother."

"And what was she about?"

"Oh, she was in the kitchen, rattling about the pots and pans."

"How did they look?"

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"Quite black!"

"And her fingers?"

"Quite white!"

"Slatternly and greedy," muttered the mother, and then sang—

> "'Slipper, slapper, dainty and fine,
> Thinks of herself, not your dinner and wine;
> Thinks of herself, not the children and cattle,
> Loves her fine dresses and much tittle-tattle.
> Look at her twice, and mark what you choose,
> And see you don't take what the beggars refuse.'

Have naught to say to her, Sepp!"

"After that I went to Barbara. She was sitting in the garden making three wreaths, one of violets, one of roses, and one of pinks. She asked me which she should wear to-day at the fair."

The mother was silent for a while, then she sang—

> "'A groom dressed in silver, a bride dressed in gold,
> The wedding-day over, the story is told;
> The silver and gold turn to copper apace,
> And woe, hard as iron, mars every face.
> So look at her twice, and mark what you choose,
> And see you don't take what the beggars refuse.'

Well, what farther, my son?"

"The fourth visit was to Madge; she was standing at the street door, giving bread to the poor."

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But the mother still shook her head, and said, "To-day she does what she wishes people to see—another day she may perchance do something she would like to hide. This morning she was standing before the door. This evening, perhaps, she will be hiding behind it. When the farmer comes into his field at midday, it is only the lazy mower who jumps up and begins to mow—the industrious ones remain taking their noontide rest. Sepp, I would rather you never married at all than take her for your wife! Did you go nowhere else?"

"Yes, I went lastly to Mary."

"And what was she about?"

"Why, nothing at all, mother!"

"Nothing! she must have been doing something," persisted the old woman. "She couldn't be doing nothing."

"She certainly was doing nothing I could see," answered her son. "Absolutely nothing—take my word for it!"

"Then choose you Mary, my boy; those girls make the best wives who never do anything the lads can talk of."

So Sepp married Mary, and was supremely happy; and he said afterwards to his mother, "Mother, your advice was very sound advice.

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"'There is Ursula dainty, and Kate, who so fine?
And Barbara thinking by gold to outshine;
There's Madge, and who like her? all so proud and so airy,
But weighed all together, not worth half my Mary.
So I'm glad I looked twice to mark what to choose,
And I find I have won what no lord would refuse.'"

I could tell you a great deal more about her if I liked, but I'll leave it for another time.

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HEINO IN THE MARSH.

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IX.

HEINO IN THE MARSH.

"OUR son is a great sportsman," said the old king; "every day he is off to the forest with his gun over his shoulder: but he never brings back any game. He gives all he kills to the poor—tender-hearted boy as he is."

So said the old king to the queen: only the deer in the forest knew better. They had not the least fear of Heino or his gun; for they had been long acquainted with both, and were perfectly sure neither would do them the slightest harm. He rode straight through the forest till he came to the end, where stood a charming little cottage, with windows and doors half smothered in honeysuckle and roses. At the door of this little cottage stood Blue-eyes. As soon as the king's son was in sight, her whole face lighted up with delight, and her blue eyes shone out like two bright stars. Heino still went shooting, and still he never brought anything home; and moreover he never would allow anybody to shoot with him, but always insisted upon riding into the forest alone—unless the king accompanied him, when,

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strange to say, his aim never brought down a single head of game. The king could not help thinking, at last, that there was something very extraordinary in the prince's great taste for such very peculiar sport, and shrewdly suspected there must be some other attraction. So he gave orders to one of his grooms to follow Heino into the forest, and all was discovered. The king was furious, for Heino was an only son, and he had long made up his mind that he should marry the daughter of some powerful king. He therefore called two of his huntsmen, and showing them a lump of gold as big as his head, promised to give it to them if they would make away with Blue-eyes.

But it so happened that Blue-eyes had a snowwhite-dove, which used to perch on the highest tree in the forest, and watch the palace; so that the moment Heino mounted his horse to ride to Blue-eyes, the dove would fly off before him and strike her wings against the cottage window, softly cooing—

> "But for rustling through the leaves,
> But for tramp of horse's hoof,
> Stealthily as midnight thieves,
> Come, sweet prince, to Clycops' roof;"

and then Blue-eyes would come and stand at the door, and wait for Heino.

As soon as the dove saw the two huntsmen creeping in the evening towards the forest, she suspected all was

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not right, and flew off to the palace, tapped gently at Heino's window, and told him all she had seen. Breathless he dashed out into the forest, and reached the cottage, just as the two huntsmen, having bound Blue-eyes hands and feet, were consulting together how best to despatch her. With one blow he cut off their heads, and carried them home and laid them down at his father's bedroom door. The old king could not sleep all night for the sighs and groans outside his door, and as soon as it was light, got up to see what it could be; and there he found the heads of his two faithful huntsmen, and between them a letter from Heino, declaring he had left father and mother for ever, and would be found at Blue-eyes' cottage, sitting on the doorstep, with his drawn sword on his knee, ready to cut off the head of any one who approached to harm his betrothed wife —yes, were it even the king himself.

The old king stood aghast as he read the letter, and went at once and told the queen all that had happened. She laughed outright when he came to the part about killing Blue-eyes.

"How could you make such a blunder! But you men are always for killing. Bend or break, that is your motto: you spoil everything you undertake or meddle with. Now there's just a case in point to-day. The lady-in-waiting in the laundry has just brought me six

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of your new shirt-collars with never a string to the whole six; and where are they, if you please? just torn off, and thrown aside, because your majesty managed to pull them into a knot and had not the patience to undo it. Heino is every bit as bad as his royal father; and then I am expected to put things right again."

"Well, well," said the king, who felt the queen was right, especially about the collars, "don't scold so—that won't mend matters. What is to be done?"

The queen lay tossing on her pillow all night thinking. At last when day dawned she went into the garden, and dug up a plant with poisonous black berries. Then she took it into the forest, and planted it just in the path Heino would be sure to take; and returning to the king in great glee, she said, "I have just put a little shrub in his way, which bears a crimson flower, and whoever plucks this flower loses all memory of his old love. We shall soon hear no more of Blue-eyes."

The next morning, as Heino went through the forest as usual, the plant stood upright in his way, with a brilliant red blossom growing on its branches shining out in the scorching rays of the sun with such an overpowering perfume that he almost fainted away as he gazed on it. Strange to say, although the dew had fallen heavily that night, both plant and flower were quite dry. "How's this?" he said—

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> "Strange shrub and flower which dry remain
> 'Mid rising dew and falling rain."

And the flower, gracefully bending its head, replied—

> "A shrub and flower which none can find
> But proud king's son with prouder mind."

And again he asked—

> "What if I tear thee branch and root,
> Or crush thee with this angry foot?"

And the flower made answer—

> "Still shall I bloom, and sweeter far;
> Me, prince can neither make nor mar."

He could stand it no longer, but seizing the blossom, turned round and went quietly back to the palace, where his parents were anxiously awaiting him.

And all remembrance of his old love had faded from his mind.

As soon as the queen saw him coming, and spied the red blossom in his doublet, she knew all had succeeded as she wished, and called out to the king, who immediately went to meet his son, accompanied by a knight bearing before him a golden helmet, and bright shining golden armour. "I am old and feeble," said the king; "go and see the world, and in two years come back again, and this kingdom shall be yours." And he went his way rejoicing.

Poor Blue-eyes, when she found Heino never returned

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to her, soon understood she was forsaken. But every morning she sent forth her snow-white dove to look round the world and find Heino, and bring her word how it fared with him.

> "Has he left his home,
> Round the world to roam?"

And the dove cooed—

> "Through the world he goes,
> Plucking many a rose;
> The thorn he has left to thee.
> Love—Faith—
> Forgotten! forgotten!
> Through wine and revelry!"

Thus two years passed away, when one evening the dove came home with a speck of blood upon her wing. Blue-eyes asked as usual—

> "Has he left his home,
> Through the world to roam?"

But, seeing the speck of blood, she cried out in sore distress, "Is he dead?"

> "Would that ye had died
> Together, side by side."

Murmured the dove—

> "Now he sinks, betrayed
> By the light he made,
> Through the moor splashing,
> Headlong onward dashing,

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> Dreaming of his fair one's charms,
> In fancy hastening to her arms,
> Where the rushes grow,—
> He sinks where none shall know."

Then Blue-eyes bade the dove fly to her shoulder, and they set out on their way to find Heino, the dove guiding her steps as they went along. And so they travelled three days, till at last they reached the marsh where Heino lay, bewitched, tired, and exhausted; she sat herself down on the edge of the dreary waste and waited till evening came. Hour after hour passed, and night drew on, and the sky darkened as the clouds chased each other, and the rain began to fall in big drops and rattle amongst the low alder bushes. Soon here and there the small blue flames began to dance, and gathering her garments closely around her, she stepped resolutely down amongst the rushes, with her large eyes fixed calmly on the whirling Will-o'-the-wisps. The way was weary, for every moment she sank up to her ankles in water, and the wind blew her golden hair blindingly across her eyes, so that she had to rest and tie it up into a thick knot at the back of her head, whilst the rain poured down her neck and shoulders in torrents.

And deeper and deeper grew the marsh, and darker the night, as the blue flames seemed to start up and mock her at every step. Sometimes they seemed to stand quite still, and sometimes to advance as if to meet

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her, so that she hastened on hoping soon to come up with them, when they would hover back again to the very middle of the marsh, or sink into the earth at her very feet, to reappear perhaps at the most distant point her eyes could see.

Blue-eyes was now sinking deeper and deeper into the water, which almost reached her knees, and it soon became impossible to advance more than a step at a time without resting.

Suddenly the storm cleared, the rain ceased, and the pale watery moon rose above the dark bank of clouds, casting its faint rays over a vast pool of black, stagnant water, in the midst of which stood the Enchanted Palace of the queen of the Will-o'-the-wisps. White marble steps led up from the death-like waters into a large open hall, whose roof was supported by pillars of blue and green crystal, with glittering golden capitals. In and out danced crowds of Will-o'-the-wisps, in mad confusion, whirling round a bright blue flame, which shone out brilliantly in the centre. All at once the crowd opened, and gave place to two bands of Will-o'-the-wisps, who rushed wildly down the palace steps. One band remained stationary close to the foot of the landing-place, whilst the other swept swiftly on, till to Blue-eyes' wondering gaze appeared twelve lovely, but deadly pale, young maidens. Each fair head was bound by a golden

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diadem, in the front of which was a tiny shell, in which flickered a deep blue flame. In wildest dance they encircled Blue-eyes, chanting out, as music of bewitching sweetness was wafted through the air—

> "To our ranks,
> To our ranks,
> Sweet sister Clycops, come;
> In our palace,
> In our palace,
> Is thy lover's home.
> Impatient he awaits thy coming,
> Cease for ever from this roaming;
> Forget what thou hast loved on earth,
> And rest thee here 'mid feast and mirth."

But Blue-eyes looked at the spirits with her large clear eyes, and said, calmly and unhesitatingly—

"Ye have no power over me, none. Whether I leave this marsh dead or alive, One above alone knows; but if I die, ye shall never have dominion over me."

The fair pale maidens danced back into the marsh, in every direction, and the second band of Will-o'-the-wisps, who had whiled away the time in waltzing before the palace steps, advanced towards her. These were twelve beautiful youths, deadly pale, with the same flickering blue light on their foreheads. Forming a complete circle round Blue-eyes, they began to dance, waving their white arms alternately over their heads, and pointing back at the palace behind them. One seemed to try and break the circle, and once or twice

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came so close to Blue-eyes he almost touched her. To her horror she discovered it was Heino! She felt as though a dagger had been thrust into her heart, and with a great and bitter cry she exclaimed—

"Heino, Heino! The Lord have mercy on you, in this your direst need!"

Hardly had the words escaped her lips, when a mighty wind arose and swept over the marsh, extinguishing all the lights. The still surface of the pool was stirred by little black wavelets, which broke at the foot of the marble steps of the palace. Then the palace sank slowly down, without a sound, into the deep, and in its place stood four posts of rotten wood, and the ruins of an old fishing-hut. Before Blue-eyes, however, stood Heino, sunk, it is true, to his very middle in the mire, but alive, only very pale and miserable. His hair hung lank over his forehead, and helmet and armour were covered with rust.

"Is it you, Blue-eyes?" he asked sadly.

"Yes, Heino, it is I."

"Leave me," he replied; "I am a lost man."

But she only gave him her hand, and cheered him up; and he tried to take a step or two forwards, but he could not, and only sighed—

"Clycops, I sink, I perish,
Leaving all I cherish!"

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But she held him the faster, saying—

> "No, no, thou sinkest not—
> Of love's magic power thou thinkest not;
> Hold fast by me,
> I can set thee free."

And so she held him step by step, though he stopped now and then in despair, repeating—

> "Clycops, I sink, I perish,
> Leaving all I cherish!"

And ever she cheered him on with the words—

> "No, no, thou sinkest not—
> Of love's magic power thou thinkest not;
> Hold fast by me,
> I can set thee free."

At last, after endless struggles, she succeeded in getting him within sight of the borders of the marsh, and the road which led out of the dreary waste lay stretched before them.

Heino exclaimed, "Blue-eyes, I can go no further. You go back home and kiss my mother. You will easily escape out of this marsh, for you are so light, you hardly sink in at all, whilst I am so deep in, it reaches to my very heart." Thereupon he turned round and looked regretfully towards the spot where the palace had stood.

"Don't look back," cried Blue-eyes anxiously; but

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hardly had she uttered the words when from the middle of the marsh came a blue flame flickering down upon them both. Swifter and swifter it sped till the queen of the Will-o'-the-wisps stood before them, her head crowned with water-lilies and a diadem of a living golden serpent wreathed amongst her hair, with glowing eyes which seemed to look Heino through and through; she placed her small white hand on his shoulder and softly pleaded, "Come back, Heino," and Heino stood irresolute between them. But in one instant Blue-eyes drew Heino's sword from his side, flashing it before the queen's eyes.

"Silly child," laughed she, "I am neither flesh nor blood!" and seizing Heino's right hand she drew him towards her, till her dark hair almost blinded him.

Blue-eyes, with one cry of despair, exclaimed, "Wretched being! though you be not human, I still will save him;" and lifting the sword high above her head, and crying, "Heino, Heino, it will not pain you much," with one blow she severed his hand at the wrist, thus freeing him from the clutches of the queen. The blue flame died out from the queen's forehead, and she herself faded back into the mist. The white dove, which until now had sat on Blue-eyes' shoulder, flew from her to Heino.

"Heino! Heino! thou art free," cried Blue-eyes as she stood beside him. "Come, we are not far from the high

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road. See it lies straight before us; one more effort, and we are safe. You do not sink half so deep now!"

And they went on farther, though every now and then Heino halted, crying—

"Blue-eyes, my arm burns sore."

But she replied ever—

"Heino sweet, it pains me more."

The last few yards she was almost forced to carry him; and as he took the last step which brought them out of the swamp, he fell powerless on the bank, and soon sank into a deep sleep. Then she took her veil and binding it round his wounded arm, she drew the ring he had given her at their betrothal from her finger, and placing it on his left hand went on her homeward way.

As soon as she arrived she asked for an audience of the old king. Looking him full in the face with her large fearless blue eyes, she said, "I have saved your son, he will soon return to you. Farewell, you shall never see me more."

Then the old king drew her to his heart, and answered, "Blue-eyes, my daughter, thy brow can wear a crown with a prouder mien than a king's child. If thou canst pardon him and consent to become the wife of a one-handed man thou shalt be his queen, as long as ye both shall live." As he said these words the doors flew open

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and Heino rushed in and clasped Blue-eyes in his arms.

Then was great rejoicing in the land, and every one came to see the maiden who had saved the king's son.

And as they stood before the altar, when Heino had to give his right hand, he forgot it was gone, and stretched out the stump, when, behold a wonder! as the priest touched it a new hand grew out as a white flower on a brown stalk, only round the wrist ran a tiny mark like a crimson thread; and that mark he kept his whole life through.

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THE UNLUCKY DOG AND FORTUNE'S FAVOURITE.

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X.

THE UNLUCKY DOG AND FORTUNE'S FAVOURITE.

IN the little town near which I live, there resided, once upon a time, a young man with whom everything went wrong. His father was called the Unlucky Dog, and so he came also to be known by the same name.

Both father and mother had died early, and left him to the care of a hard-favoured, angular old aunt, who brought him up by giving him a good flogging regularly every time she came from church; and, as she went to church every day, so every day the poor boy had his flogging. The poor little fellow really was very unlucky, for if he happened to be sent to fetch a glass, he was sure to let it fall, and when he tried to pick up the pieces he was certain to cut his fingers. And it was just the same in everything. To be sure the old aunt died at last, and he planted so many shrubs and bushes round her grave, that one really was inclined to think he had tried to plant all the sticks she had broken across his shoulders. Nevertheless, with this exception, his

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unlucky star seemed to grow brighter every year. At last he became so miserably unhappy, that he determined upon seeing the world; "for," said he, "worse it never can be, and perhaps it may be better."

So putting all his fortune into his pocket, he wandered away out through the gates of the town. Now just outside stood a stone bridge, over which he had to pass. Here he rested a little, and, leaning against the parapet, he watched the tiny waves as they beat themselves into foam against the arches, and something felt very heavy about his heart, and he almost began to think he was very foolish to leave the town in which he had lived so many years; and so, perhaps, he would have stood thinking for long, if a sudden gust of wind had not seized his hat and blown it into the river beneath; then he awoke from his dreams, but his hat was already under the bridge, and dancing off into the middle of the stream, Each time as it rose on the crest of the wave it seemed to mock him and say, "Adieu, Unlucky Dog, I'm off: you stay at home, if you like."

So, Unlucky Dog, without his hat, trudged forth on his travels. Many a joyous band of comrades could he have joined, but when he was asked to be of the party, he only shook his head and said, "No, no, I should bring you bad luck; besides which, I am called Unlucky Dog." No sooner had they heard the name, than the

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merry men looked sad and puzzled, and soon made off as fast as their feet could carry them. Often, late and tired, he would come to some wayside inn, and sit himself down in the farthest corner he could find, with his head on his hand, and his supper untouched before him. Then, sometimes, the landlord's pretty daughter, giving him a quiet tap on the shoulder, which would start him half off his chair, would ask him what was the matter, he looked so dull. No sooner had he told his story, perhaps only mentioned his name, than gently shaking her head the damsel quietly went back to her spinning-wheel, and left him to his own thoughts.

After Unlucky Dog had wandered about for many weeks in this unsatisfactory manner, without well knowing where he was going to, he came at length one day to a beautiful large garden, which had a golden railing all round it. Through these railings he saw large clumps of trees and graceful shrubs, and smoothly shaven lawns and a sparkling stream, spanned by light and airy bridges, which led to alleys of enchanting beauty. Tame deer and timid fawns roamed over the glittering amber paths, and came stretching their pretty brown soft necks through the rails, in search of a hand to caress them and give them bread. In the midst of the garden, embedded in trees, stood a grand old castle, whose silver tiles glistened in the sunbeams, whilst from the towers

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hung flags and banners as on a gala day. Creeping along outside the railing, Unlucky Dog at length came to a gateway, which stood wide open, and from whence a shady avenue led straight up to the castle door. In the garden all was silent, not a soul was to be seen or heard. At the gate hung a tablet. "Ah, ah," thought our traveller, "as usual; if by chance one comes upon some pleasant shady spot with the gate wide open inviting one in, so sure will there be a notice to let you know you will be prosecuted if you venture to intrude!" However, to his amazement, he found he was wrong this time, for on the board was written nothing but, "Tears are forbidden here." "What a silly announcement!" he cried, pulling out his handkerchief, and giving his eyes a hasty rub, for he was not quite sure that perhaps half a tear might not still remain from the olden days. After this he stepped boldly through the gate; but the broad road leading straight to the castle rather scared him, so he betook himself to a narrow footpath between hedges of roses and jasmine. Following this for a short time, he came to a little plantation, from whence many winding paths led to a slight eminence, on the summit of which, amongst lilies and roses, sat a lovely maiden. On her lap she held a golden crown, upon which she gently breathed, polishing it with her silken scarf until it shone again; when, loudly clapping her tiny hands, she

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stroked back her long shining hair and placed her crown upon her head. At the sight of this, Unlucky Dog felt such a strange sensation, he was like to die of fright. His heart beat loud as if it would burst, and springing aside he hid himself among the bushes. But, as ill luck would have it, his refuge was a barbery bush, a twig of which came right across his face, and as the wind wafted it to and fro, a little thorn just lightly touched the tip of his nose, causing him to give a loud sneeze. Startled in her turn, the maiden with the crown turned round and saw Unlucky Dog crouching under the bushes.

"Why do you hide there?" she cried; "you won't hurt me; or, do I frighten you?"

At this, Unlucky Dog, trembling like an aspen leaf, came from behind his bushes.

"Ah! I see there's no danger," she laughed; "come here and sit down; all my playmates have run away and left me alone. Perhaps you can tell me a pretty story—something to make me laugh, it must be. But how dull you look! what is the matter? I declare if you had not that sad face, you would be quite handsome."

"If you really wish it, I will obey you. But, who are you? I never in all my life saw anything half so fair."

"I? oh, I am Princess Fortuna, called 'The Favourite of Fortune,' and this is my father's garden."

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"And what are you doing here, all alone?"

"I feed my fawns and my deer, and polish my crown."

"And after that?"

"I feed my goldfish."

"And when that's done?"

"Then my playmates come, and we laugh, and sing, and dance."

"Oh! what a happy life you lead! and is that every day?"

"Yes, every day. But now you tell me what your name is, and who you are."

"Oh, lovely princess, ask me not. I am the most unfortunate of men, and have the worst of names."

"Fie!" said she, "an ugly name is a bad thing. In my father's domain, there is a man called Waddleduck, and another called Fatface. I am sure your name can't be as bad as that?"

"No," he said, sadly, "my name is neither Waddleduck nor Fatface, but I am called Unlucky Dog!"

"Unlucky Dog! Why it's enough to make one die of laughing! But can you find no other name? Let me see, I will think of a pretty one for you, and ask my father to allow you to change yours—my father can do anything he likes, for he is a king!—but only on one condition, you must put on a happy, merry look. Now

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then, begin by taking your hand from your face, and leave off rubbing that nose of yours: you really have quite a pretty nose, if you would leave it alone. Shake back your hair from your forehead. There! now you look a little more like a sensible being. And now tell me what makes you so miserably unhappy. I am always happy, and everybody who talks to me is happy too: you are the only person who isn't."

"Why am I unhappy? Why I have been wretched all my life long: nothing but bad luck. You are always merry, you say; how do you manage that?"

"Well, you must know that I have a fairy godmother, to whom my father once did some good service. When I was christened she took me in her arms, and kissing me on the forehead said, 'Thou, little one, shalt be ever happy, and make every one happy around thee: even the most unhappy creature in the world shall forget his misery in looking on thee. Fortune, the Favourite of Fortune, shall be thy name.' I don't suppose any fairy kissed you?"

"No, no, never," he hastily replied.

Whereupon the princess became silent and thoughtful; then, raising her dark blue eyes, looked at him in such deep pity that an icy shiver seemed to steal through his veins. Then she said again, "I wonder whether it must always be a fairy godmother, or if a princess

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would do as well,—a princess is somebody. There now, come here, kneel down—so—you are too tall for me;" and thus saying she stepped lightly before him and kissed him gently on the forehead, and then ran laughing away.

Before Unlucky Dog had well recovered himself she had disappeared. Slowly he rose. It was as if he had been dreaming, and yet he felt he had not been dreaming; for a wondrous joyful feeling was taking possession of his heart. "If I only had my hat," he said, "I would toss it into the air for joy; perhaps it would begin to warble and fly off like a lark; so queer I feel, I declare. Why I think I must be happy! Well that would be extraordinary, to be sure!" so saying he gathered himself a famous nosegay, and humming a merry lively song, he went on gaily on his journey along the dusty road.

No sooner had he reached the next town, than he bought himself a fine suit of crimson velvet, slashed with white satin, and a crimson velvet cap with a long white feather, and as he gazed at himself in the mirror, he exclaimed, "Ah, ah! Unlucky Dog they call me; we shall see if I can't find another name yet, and the oldest and best, or I'll have none of it." Then jumping on a spirited charger, and pricking its sides till it danced along, he thus continued his journey.

Meanwhile, Princess Fortuna, after she gave her kiss,

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ran and ran, then she went slower and slower, and at last she sank on a bench not far from the castle and wept bitterly. And when her playmates came back she was weeping still; they tried to comfort her, but in vain. Then away they ran to the king in despair. "For goodness sake, sir king—a misfortune to the whole country—Princess Fortuna sits sobbing in the garden, and nobody can pacify her."

When the king heard this he became quite pale with fright, and, springing down the steps of his throne, rushed madly into the garden; and there sat the weeping princess, with her crown on her lap so covered with tears that it shone in the sun as if it had been set with diamonds.

The king clasped his daughter in his arms, and tried all he could to soothe her, but she sobbed on the more. He led her to the castle, and commanded everything rare and beautiful to be brought to her that the country produced; but of no avail: she remained inconsolable. To all his questions as to what dreadful heartache had come to her, she answered never a word. But the king persisted, and at last she could withstand him no longer, and told him how she was one day sitting in the garden, when a young man came in with such a melancholy face she was obliged to kiss him, and see if that would perhaps make him a little less sad.

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"Can it be?" cried the king, clasping his hands over his head in despair—"a stranger! a wanderer! perhaps a day-labourer, with ragged clothes; to say nothing about his hat! No, it is impossible!"

"I felt so sorry for him."

"A pretty reason for a princess, indeed! To go and kiss a nobody like that Unlucky Dog, indeed. No, that man I must find; and having found him—off with his head! That is the least punishment he deserves."

Thereupon the king ordered out his cavalry to scour the country in every direction and hunt up poor Unlucky Dog. "If you find a stripling, who looks as if the mice had eaten up all his corn—without a hat—that is your man. Dead or alive, bring him here." And away flew the cavalry like chaff before the wind, scattered all over the land. Many of them passed Unlucky Dog himself, proudly prancing on his steed in his gay bright clothes; but they did not recognise him by the description, so they returned to the castle to the king, from their fruitless errand, who rated them soundly for useless do-nothings. The princess remained sorrowful as ever, and every day brought her down to dinner with her eyes red with weeping, so that the poor king could do nothing but look at his lovely disconsolate daughter, leaving his soup and his fish to get cold untouched; and

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thus week after week went by. At length, one day there was a great shouting and noise in the courtyard of the castle. Every one was on the alert; and before the king had time to reach the window, two of the cavalry officers appeared, driving poor Unlucky Dog before them. They had bound his hands behind him; but his face was radiant as though nothing in the world could give him greater pleasure than what had happened to him. He bowed low to the king, and then stood up proudly awaiting his sentence.

"We have found the dainty bird, your majesty," said the elder of the two; "but he must have moulted between whiles, for the description is about as like him as chalk to cheese, and we should never have taken him, if the stupid fellow had not told us the whole story himself. And what do you suppose he did when we made him prisoner? Why, sang and laughed all the merrier! And when we set him on his horse and brought him here between us, he does nothing but abuse us all the time for not riding faster—just as if he did not know when he got here he had nothing to expect but to have his head chopped off. Well, your gracious majesty, if that is a specimen of the unhappiest man in your kingdom, I should be glad to see the happiest."

No sooner had the king heard this than stepping up to Unlucky Dog with crossed arms, he said, "So you

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are the man who had the audacity to allow the Princess to kiss him."

"It is true, your majesty; and since then I have become the very happiest being in creation."

"To the dungeon with him! and to-morrow we will cut off his head!"

To the dungeon went the cavalry with poor Unlucky Dog. The king, however, paced backwards and forwards, and thought to himself, "This is a very bad case. I've got the criminal, and his head shall be off to-morrow; but that won't make my Fortuna happy again." Then he stole off to his daughter's room, and, listening at her door, shook his head, and went slowly back again and sent for his privy council. Upon hearing the state of the case the president thus delivered himself—

"May it please your majesty,—I don't know that it would do any good, but it might. This Unlucky Dog was first sad, and now is merry; our lovely princess in the same way was once merry, and now is ever weeping. That kiss, I should certainly say, was somehow the cause of it all. Now let Unlucky Dog return the princess's kiss: that, your majesty, is my decided opinion."

"Impossible—perfectly impossible!" replied the king. "It would be contrary to all etiquette and the traditions of my house."

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"Your majesty must look upon it as an affair of state, and from that point of view no one can have a word to say against it."

"Well," cried the king, after duly weighing the pros and cons, "perhaps there may be something in that. We will try it. Let all the earls and knights assemble in the throne-room, and order the prisoner to appear before me."

Whereupon the king put on his royal robes and mounted his throne. Near him stood the princess in utter ignorance why she was there; and in a circle round them was ranged the whole court—a mass of grandees in gold embroidery and stars and garters. At length the doors flew open, and Unlucky Dog was brought in.

"You are to be beheaded to-morrow," said the king; "but before you will, this very moment, and in the presence of the whole of this brilliant assembly, return my daughter the kiss she in a thoughtless moment bestowed on you."

"If that is all your majesty commands," answered Unlucky Dog, "I am delighted to obey; and if it could be possible for mortal man to be happier than I already am, that shall I be without doubt."

Whereupon with the greatest respect, Unlucky Dog approached the princess, and taking her in his arms

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imprinted the one kiss upon her forehead. She, however, taking his hand with a happy smile, stood with him before the throne.

"Well, my dearest daughter, you are a little happier now, I trust?" said the king.

"Just a very little, my royal father," she replied, "but it won't last long."

"Alas! no," said the disheartened king. "He is not a bit sad as he ought to be, for there he stands smiling, with that odious happy handsome face. What's to be done next?"

"My dear father," cried the now-blushing princess, casting her eyes to the ground, "I know, and will tell you, but only in your ear."

Thereupon the king, leading the princess to an adjoining chamber, soon returned, and taking Unlucky Dog's hand, laid it in that of the princess, and said to all his assembled earls and knights—

"It cannot be helped—it is fate's decree. This is my dear son, and when I come to die—your king."

So Unlucky Dog became a prince, and later a king. He lived in the golden palace, and gave the princess so many kisses that soon she was much happier than she had ever been in her whole life. The princess gave him numbers of sweet names—every day a new one; only sometimes when she was particularly wicked she would

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say, "Do you remember the silly name you once possessed?" and then she would go off into peals of silvery laughter.

"Hush, hush, my darling! What would people say if they heard you? Why I should at the very least lose all their proper respect; for who ever heard of a Christian being called 'Unlucky Dog'?"

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THE DREAMING BEECH.

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XI.

THE DREAMING BEECH.

MORE than a hundred years have passed since it was struck by lightning and split from top to bottom, and the plough has well furrowed the place where it grew. Before that time the mighty old beech tree stood, some hundred yards from the first houses of the village, on a grassy mound, a tree such as one never sees in these days, because animals, plants, trees, and men, are becoming small and mean.

The peasants said the tree dated from the early Christian era, and that a holy apostle had been massacred beneath it by the false heathen; that the roots of the tree had drunk up the apostle's blood, which, rising through the trunk and branches, had made them so large and strong. Who knows if the legend be true? Anyhow there was certainly one curious fact concerning the tree, and everybody in the village knew about it, small and great. Whoever fell asleep under the tree and dreamt a dream, that dream would surely come true. So, from time immemorial, is was called the Dreaming Beech, and no one knew it by any other name. There was,

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however, a peculiar condition attached to the dreaming, and if anybody lay down under the beech with the idea of dreaming of some one particular thing, then the dream would sure to be nothing but confusion and rubbish and nonsense of all sorts, of which no one could make either head or tail. Now this was assuredly rather a difficult stipulation, because most people are so very likely to think of what lies nearest the heart; consequently, at the time this story commences not a man or woman had ever tried the plan with success. Still, for all that, it was not to be denied but that the tradition of the Dreaming Beech was true.

One hot summer's day, when not a breath of air stirred, a poor journeyman came wandering along the road. Things had gone very badly with him for many years in foreign parts. When he reached the village he turned his pockets inside out for the last time, but alas! they were empty.

"What am I to do?" he thought to himself. "I'm tired to death, but no one will take me in for nothing, and it is hard to beg." Just then his eyes fell upon the noble beech tree, on the green grassy slope; and as it stood only a few yards from the road he laid himself down under it to rest. A gentle breeze sprung up and rustled amongst the branches, whilst here and there a gleam of glittering sunshine fell as the leaves were

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moved, disclosing glimpses of the deep blue sky beyond. Then the tired wanderer closed his eyes and slept. Whilst he was thus soundly sleeping, a branch dropped from the beech tree, with three leaves on it, which fell just on his breast. He dreamt that he sat at a table, in a most cozy room; and the table was his own, and the room, and indeed the whole house. At the table, leaning on it with both hands, stood a young woman looking lovingly at him; and that was his wife. On his knees sat a child, whom he was feeding with soup, and because the soup was too hot, he blew upon the spoon to cool it. Then his wife cried out laughingly, "What a capital nurse you make!" Jumping about the room was another child, a fat, rosy-cheeked urchin, dragging about a large carrot, to which he had tied a string, and shouting out "Tally ho!" as if it were the finest fox! And both the children were his own.

This was his dream; and it must have been a very pleasant dream, for his whole face beamed in his sleep with happiness.

When he awoke it was almost evening, and before him stood a shepherd smoking. He sprang up from the ground, much refreshed; stretched himself and yawned, saying—

"Heavens! if it were only true! but at all events it was pleasant to know how it would all feel!"

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Then the shepherd came up and asked him whence he came, and whither he was going, and whether he had ever heard of the wonderful Beech?

Having learnt he was as innocent about it as a new-born babe, he exclaimed—

"Well, you're a lucky dog! For any one could read in your face you were dreaming something pleasant. I was looking at you for a long time as you lay there." And he told him the peculiar virtue of the tree. "It's sure to come true," he added; "as certain as that this is a sheep and that a lamb. Ask the people in the village if it is not so. Now just tell me what you dreamt."

"Old fellow," answered the young man, grinning, "that's the way, is it, you question strangers in these parts? I mean to keep my beautiful dream to myself, and you can't be surprised at that. But for all that nothing will come of it;" and he really believed what he was saying, for as he walked towards the village, he murmured to himself, "Stuff and nonsense! old wives' tales! I should like to know how a tree could come by such power!"

As he came into the village he saw stuck out from the roof of the third house a long pole with a golden crown dangling from it. And below, at the door, stood the landlord of the Crown Inn. He happened just then to be in good humour, for he had had a very good supper,

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and was feeling in consequence quite happy and genial. So the young labourer pulled off his cap, and asked for a night's shelter. The landlord of the Crown looked at the smart lad, in his dusty, ragged clothes, from top to toe, and then kindly nodding, said to him—

"Sit down here in this arbour; I dare say there's a bit of bread and cheese and a jug of beer to spare for ye, and a truss of straw in the loft at night."

Whereupon he went into the house, and sent out his daughter with the bread and cheese and beer, and she sat down beside the young man and asked him to tell her of foreign lands, and in return told him all the village gossip, and how the corn stood, and when the next dance at the Crown would be.

Suddenly she rose, leaned towards the stranger, and said—

"Pray tell me what those three leaves are, sticking out of your waistcoat?"

The young man looked down and found the twig, with the three leaves, which had fallen upon him whilst he slept. It was caught in the flap of his waistcoat.

"It must have fallen from the great beech tree just outside the village," he replied; "I had a nap under it!"

The girl listened attentively, waiting to hear what he would say next. When he had ceased speaking, she

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began to question him narrowly, till she had ascertained beyond a doubt that he had really fallen asleep under the great beech tree; and that, moreover, he knew nothing of the wonderful power and properties attached to the tree. For he was a sly dog, and pretended to know nothing.

As soon as she had done questioning, she went and drew him another jug of beer, and pressed him to drink, telling him all the lovely things she had herself dreamt, and what a pity it was they had never come true.

Just then the shepherd came from the field, driving his sheep through the village.

As he passed the Crown Inn, he saw the two sitting in the arbour in earnest converse, and he stood still a moment, and said—

"Ah, yes, he'll be sure to tell you the beautiful dream, though I can get nothing out of him." And then he drove on his sheep.

When the girl found, do what she would, she could not learn anything about the dream, her curiosity knew no bounds, and at last she could control herself no longer, and asked him outright what he had dreamt whilst sleeping under the beech.

Then the young man, who was a mischievous rogue, and in very high spirits about his pleasant dream, with a sly look and a wink, said—

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"Ah! I had a most glorious dream, which must come true; but I dare not tell you what it was."

But she worried and teased him so, that at last he drew his chair towards her, and told her quite gravely—

"I dreamt I should marry the daughter of the landlord of the Crown Inn, and that after a bit I should become landlord myself!"

On hearing this the girl grew as white as a lily, and then as red as a rose, and got up and walked back into the house. Then after some little time she came again, and asked if he had really dreamt it, and was quite in earnest.

"To be sure, to be sure," said he; "she who appeared to me in the dream was most certainly just like you!"

Then the girl went again into the house, and did not return. She walked straight to her own room; and thoughts flowed through her brain like water that runneth apace. First one idea, then another chased it away, till back came the first thoughts. There was no end to the confusion! "He knows nothing about the tree," she said to herself, "he dreamt it, and whether I wish it or no, it will surely come to pass; there's no possibility of changing that." And with this she went to bed, and dreamt the whole night of the young man. When she awoke the next morning, she knew his face by

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heart, so often had she seen it in her dreams during the night. And he was a very good-looking fellow too.'

The young man had slept soundly on his bed of straw. Dreaming Beech, dream, and all he had said to the landlord's daughter, were alike forgotten. He stood at the door of the tap-room, and was just shaking the landlord's hand, and wishing him "good-bye," when the girl entered. On seeing him ready to start, an indescribable feeling came over her, and she could not let him go.

"Father," she said, "the beer has not yet been tapped, and the young man has nothing to do; couldn't he stay a day longer, and earn his board and lodging, and get something beside for the journey home?"

The landlord had no objection to make to this proposal, as he had just had his morning draught and was in the best of humours.

Somehow the beer-tapping progressed but slowly. Then came bottling the wine, and when the cask was empty and the bottles full, then the girl thought he could help in the field work, and when that was finished there were so many things to be done in the garden, that no one ever thought of before. So week after week slipped by, and every night she dreamt of him. In the evenings she sat with him in the arbour by the house; and when he told her how roughly strangers had treated him, and what hardships he had gone through, it was

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really very singular, but a gnat or a hair was sure to get into her eyes, so that she was obliged to wipe them with the corner of her apron.

And so it came to pass, that at the end of the year the young man was still in the house. And then the floors were well scoured, and white sand and fir twigs strewn in all the rooms, and the whole village had a holiday. It was the wedding day of the young journeyman and the innkeeper's daughter; and everybody rejoiced at it, except just the few who sulked because they were jealous or pretended to be so.

Not long after, the landlord of the Crown Inn was decidedly once more in a happy frame of mind. He had been eating and drinking to his heart's content, and sat in his arm-chair with his snuff-box on his knee. Long he slept; and at last when they tried to awake him, they found he was dead!

So the young journeyman became really landlord of the Crown, as he had said he would in joke. And, indeed, all that he had dreamt under the beech tree came true, for soon he had two lovely children, one of whom he probably took sometimes on his knees and fed with a spoon, and possibly blew upon the food when it was too hot. Perhaps, too, the other boy ran about the room with the carrot; but the person who told me this tale did not happen to mention the fact, and I forgot to

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ask him about it. But it must have happened so, because whatever one dreamt under the beech tree always did come true, to the very letter.

One day about five years later, the young landlord, for such he now was, had come in, and was sitting in the tap-room, when his wife ran in, and said to him—

"Only fancy! yesterday at noon one of our mowers fell asleep under the Dreaming Beech, without knowing it, and what do you think he dreamt? Why, that he was immensely rich! and only think who it was—Caspar, old Caspar, who is half-witted, and everybody pities and keeps only for charity. What on earth will he do with all his money?"

"Wife," laughed the husband, "how can you believe such rubbish? You, a sensible woman! Just reflect for one moment. How is it possible a tree can foretell the future—let it be ever such an old and beautiful tree?"

The wife gazed at her husband with wondering eyes, shook her head, and said slowly—

"Husband, don't speak so wickedly! you ought not to joke on such subjects."

"I am not joking, my dear," replied the husband.

For a time the woman was silent, as if she had not rightly understood him. Then she said—

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"Why pretend what you do not mean? Surely you of all others have most reason to be grateful to the tree. Hasn't all you dreamt under it come true?"

"God knows," replied the husband, when she had finished speaking—"God knows, I am grateful, grateful to Him and to you. Yes, it was a beautiful dream, and I remember it like yesterday; but everything is a thousand times better than I dreamt it, and you, love, a thousand times prettier and dearer than the young woman who appeared in my dream. But as regards the tree, my darling, this is my opinion: if a man loves dancing, he will soon find the music to dance to—and Echo repeats the words that are spoken to her. I had been for so many years wretched and miserable amongst strangers, it was no wonder if once in a way I dreamt a pleasant dream."

"But still it was strange you should dream you were to marry me."

"I never dreamt that! all I saw was a young woman, with two children, but she was not half as pretty as you, or the children either."

"Fie!" cried the wife; "do you mean to deny me or the tree? Didn't you tell me the first day we met? It was in the evening, out there in the arbour. Didn't you tell me you had dreamt you were to marry me, and become landlord of the Crown Inn?"

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Then the man remembered the joke he had played his wife, and said—

"It can't be helped, dear wife. I did not really dream of you, and if I said so, it was only a joke. I remember you were so very inquisitive, and I wanted to tease you."

Upon this the wife burst into a flood of tears and left the room. When he followed her, she was standing in the courtyard still crying. He did all he could to comfort her, but in vain.

"You have stolen my love, and cheated me out of my heart," she said; "I shall never be happy again, no! never!"

Then he asked her if she did not love him more than anybody in the world, and if they had not been the happiest couple in the whole village?

She could not deny this; but nevertheless she remained sad and miserable, notwithstanding all he could say. So he thought, "Let her cry herself out—to-morrow she will be herself again." But she was not herself again; for the next morning, though she certainly had ceased weeping, she was sadder and graver than ever, and pointedly avoided her husband.

Every attempt at reconciliation failed; nearly all day she sat gloomily by herself, starting whenever her husband came near her.

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This state of things continuing some time, he also began to grow melancholy, fearing he had altogether lost his wife's love. Silently he moved about the house, thinking how to cure the evil; but no idea occurred to him: so at noon he went out into the village, and loitered carelessly through the fields. The rich, ripe corn waved like a golden lake, and the birds sang sweetly enough, but his heart was full of sorrow. In the distance stood the old Dreaming Beech, queen of the forest it towered towards heaven. It seemed to beckon him with its green waving branches to come nearer like a good old friend. He went and sat beneath its shade, thinking of days gone by. Five years had passed since he, a poor miserable wretch, had rested there for the first time, and dreamt that pleasant dream. How pleasant! for it had lasted five years, and now—all gone! all gone! for ever and ever.

Then the beech began to rustle again, as it had done five years ago, and to move its mighty branches; and as they moved there fell, as then, the golden glittering sunlight across its leaves, and through the boughs peeped ever and anon the deep blue sky. Then his heart grew calmer, and he slept. Soon he dreamt that dream again of five years ago. The woman at the table and the little children at their play; but now, the faces were the faces of his own dear wife and children, and she

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looked at him with her large brown eyes so kindly, ah, so kindly! And then he awoke, and found it was only a dream! More sorrowful than before, he broke off a small green twig from the tree, and went home and placed it in his hymn-book.

The next day was Sunday, and as they went to church the leaves fell out at the wife's feet. He turned scarlet as he stooped to pick them up and put them into his pocket. But the wife had seen it and asked what it was.

"Only leaves from the Dreaming Beech, which is much kinder to me than you are. Yesterday I was resting beneath it and fell asleep. It wished to console me, for I dreamt that you were kind to me again, and had forgiven everything; but it is not true. The good old beech, though it is a noble tree, knows nothing about the future."

The wife gazed at him, and it was as if a ray of sunshine had crossed her face.

"Husband, did you really dream that?"

"Yes," he answered positively.

And she knew it was the truth, by the twitching about his mouth, like one who has a difficulty in restraining his tears.

"And I was really your wife?"

"Really my own true wife;" and she fell on his neck, and half-suffocated him with kisses.

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"Thank God," she said, "now it is all right again! I love you so dearly, how dearly you can never know. And all these long weary days I have been in such dread, lest I was wrong in loving you, and that God meant me to have another husband, and you another wife; for you certainly did steal my heart, you bad man! and there was deception at first—yes, you stole my heart, but it did not do you much good, for you know things must have happened just as they did, whether we would or no." Then, after a pause she continued—

"Promise me never to speak slightingly of the Dreaming Beech again?"

"I never will, for I believe in it, as much as you do, depend upon it, though in a different way, perhaps. And now let us paste the leaves in the beginning of our hymn-book, so that they may not be lost."

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THE HUMPBACKED MAIDEN.

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XII.

THE HUMPBACKED MAIDEN.

A GERMAN STORY.

THERE lived once a poor woman with an only child, a little daughter, who was so pale and small that she was quite different from all other children. When this poor woman went out with her little girl, people would turn round to look after them and then whisper to each other. And when the little girl asked her mother why every one stared at them so, the mother would tell her, "Perhaps it is because you have such a pretty new frock," and so the child was satisfied. But when they got back home, the mother would clasp her little one in her arms and cry, kissing her over and over again. "My child, my darling! what will become of thee when I am gone? No one knows what an angel she is; no, not even her father."

Not long after the poor mother was taken suddenly ill, and on the ninth day she died. The father of this little girl was in despair; he threw himself on his dead wife, and vowed he would be buried with her. His friends,

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however, persuaded him to be comforted at last, and he consoled himself at the end of the year by taking another wife, younger, prettier, and richer than the first; but, alas! not half so good!

As for the child, since her mother's death she had done nothing but sit in the window-seat and look up into the sky from morning till night, for nobody troubled themselves now to take her out. So she became paler than ever, and never grew a bit the whole year.

But when the new mother came, she said to herself, "Now, then, I shall go about again outside the town, into the merry sunshine and along the beautiful roads with the green hedges, where the lovely flowers and bushes grow, and where all the fine ladies and gentlemen walk." For this poor little girl lived in a narrow street, into which the sun never shone, and it was only when you sat in the window-seat that a bit of blue sky could be seen, and then it was not bigger than a pocket-handkerchief!

The new mother began very soon to go out every day, morning and afternoon, and dressed herself always in a lovely dress of brilliant colours, which was much finer than any the old mother had ever worn, but she never took the little girl with her.

At last she took heart, this poor child, and begged hard to be allowed to go at least just once. But the new

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mother sharply told her, "No," for, "what would the people say," she exclaimed, "if I were to show myself about with such an object? Why, bless the child, don't you know you're a perfect hunchback, and whoever heard of humpbacked children going out walking?—they're always left at home!"

The little girl said not another word, but as soon as the new mother had gone out she jumped up on a chair before the looking-glass, and looked at herself a long time. Yes, she was humpbacked; there it was, a regular round hump between her shoulders, there was no mistake about it. She got quietly down and mounted into her place in the window-seat, looking into the street beneath, and thinking of the days when that old mother had taken her out—and then she thought of her hump.

"I wonder what there is inside," she said to herself; "there must be something inside such a hump."

And the summer passed, and winter came, and the little girl was paler and thinner still, and at last, when the snowdrops began to peep from the hardened earth, the old mother came one night and told her how lovely the golden heavens above were, and in the morning the little maiden lay dead.

"Don't take on so, husband," said the new mother; "it's much the best that could happen to such a child."

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But the husband said not a word, only shook his head mournfully and thought of his dead wife and child.

As soon as they had buried her, an angel with wings of snow came flying from heaven, and sat himself down close to the little grave, and knocked upon it gently as though it had been a door, and presently the child came forth from her grave and listened as he told her he had come to take her home to her mother in heaven. But the little maiden looked shyly into the shining face, and asked if humpbacked children might go to heaven, since everything there was so fine, and grand, and beautiful.

"My little one," the angel answered; "thou art no longer humpbacked," and striking his white hand across her shoulders the old hump fell away like an empty nut-shell, and—what was in it? Two beautiful swan-like angel's wings; and spreading them wide, as if she had been always used to flying, away she sped with the angel-guide through the blinding sunshine, on—on, into the blue heavens above, and in the highest place of all sat that good mother of old, with arms outstretched towards her, and, with one more sweep of her swan-like wings, she flew straight to that old mother's breast, never to be parted more.

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HEAVENLY MUSIC.

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XIII.

HEAVENLY MUSIC.

IN the golden age, when angels came and played with the peasant children on the sandheaps by the sea-shore, the gates of heaven stood wide open, and rays of golden glory fell like rain upon the earth—man gazed straight into the open heaven, and saw the saints above walking among the stars, and greeted them; and the saints would return the greeting. But the most exquisite of all things was the glorious music, which in those days was heard from heaven. The spirit of the Almighty had composed it, and thousands of angels were the performers on harps and trumpets and cymbals.

At the sound of it, all on earth was hushed. The winds ceased to blow, and the waters of the seas and rivers stood still. Man could only listen with clasped hands in silent awe, and a wondrous feeling stole into the heart, such as is not given now for man to conceive. Thus it was in those times, but it did not last long. One day as a punishment the gates of heaven were closed, the angels ceased playing, and all around was sad—and very sad indeed were the angels, as each one, seated on

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a cloud, holding his sheet of music in his hand, began to cut up the paper with his small golden scissors, letting the scraps fall down to the earth. There the wind seized upon them, drifting them as snowflakes over mountain and valley, and scattering them over the whole world. Then the children of man each caught up a scrap of the music, one a small, the other a larger piece, till all were gathered and carefully stored away. For was it not part of the heavenly music which had sounded so glorious through the air? In the course of time it came to pass that they all began to quarrel about the scraps, for each one fancied he had caught the best piece, till at last every one declared he alone possessed the real heavenly music, and that all the others were but deception and imitation. Those who wished to be thought very wise indeed—and there were many such—made a grand flourish at the beginning or end of their MS., and thought themselves inspired for doing so. One whistled in A, the other sang in B. One played in minor, the other in major, not one understood the other—in short there was a noise like the Tower of Babel; and so it has gone on to the present time.

But at the last day, when the stars shall fall to earth and the sun into the sea, then the children of men shall crowd round the gates of heaven, as at Christmas time little children crowd round the door which hides the

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Christmas tree from their sight. Then the angels shall be sent to collect all the scraps of the Heavenly Music-book, and large as well as small will be gathered in—even to the smallest upon which only one note is written. The angéls will join all together, and once more the heavenly music will resound through the sky as glorious as of yore.

And the children of men will stand surprised and abashed, listening and exclaiming one to another, "Surely that was your piece, and this mine—but ah! how different it all sounds now! Glorious and wonderful it peals through the air—joined by the angels in its own right place!"

Yes! you may rely upon it. Thus it will be.

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THE OLD HAIR TRUNK

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XIV.

THE OLD HAIR TRUNK.

THERE was an old gentleman once who had by him a hair trunk. Not a handsome patent-leather travelling portmanteau, but an ugly, exceedingly shabby, old-fashioned trunk, covered with stripped yellow hair, and bound with iron. The moths had been very busy with the hair, rust had considerably damaged the iron, and time had given many a bump to the metal bands and corners.

"That's an article that has seen a good many ups and downs," said the witty porter, as he took the trunk from the carriage and flung it to the ground with a crash, which was not particularly adapted to improve its appearance; its iron corners, however, defended it pretty well from the passers-by.

"It's no use coming so close," it growled to the other boxes who had been its travelling companions. "You only want to see how moth-eaten I am!"

The gentleman to whom this superannuated piece of

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antiquity belonged, was a very eccentric man, for when he was at home, the old trunk always stood in the place of honour in his library, under a fine gilt mirror, looking very much out of place, indeed, in such a handsome room. When he travelled, the first thing he thought of was always the old trunk, which he had brought from his carriage and placed by his side.

"It must surely be full of gold, for he never loses sight of it," said one. But here they were completely in the dark; something, certainly, the old trunk contained, but not gold—money least of all.

As soon as the old gentleman found himself alone he would go up to it and press his finger on a hidden spring, when the lid flew open and discovered an inner box of bright crimson velvet, with gold bands and fastenings. If any one came, presto! down went the lid.

Now it so happened this old gentleman had an exceedingly inquisitive housekeeper. One day, leaving her shoes at the door, she managed to steal unperceived into the room, when the trunk stood open. She had almost succeeded in reaching it, when, dazzled by the splendour of the crimson and gold, she quite forgot herself, and exclaimed—

"Well, to be sure! who'd have thought it? Why, if the old trunk isn't quite new inside!"

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Then the old trunk knew a stranger was near, and presto! down came the lid so sharp, as almost to pinch off the finger with which she had tried to stroke the velvet to see if it were real.

"What a vicious old thing," she cried in a fright, "not to let one so much as touch it!" For the future, however, if anybody ever asked her about the trunk her master made such a mystery of, she only answered there was nothing odd about it at all, far less in it. Every one had their little peculiarities, and her master had his; he had just set his heart upon the old hair trunk, and that was all about it.

But that was not all, for there really was something exceedingly strange about the old trunk. Occasionally the old gentleman would bolt himself in his library, and having pressed down the secret spring and raised the lid, would carefully lift out the crimson and gold box and put it on the table, then after listening for a while, that nobody was near, he would press down another hidden spring, and the crimson lid would fly open—and what was there?

Wonderful, but true! a tiny, wee, lovely fairy princess, with her hair in two long plaits, and her feet in little slippers, with high red heels. With one bound she sprang out and seated herself on the box, highly delighted at the

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feat, and began immediately to relate such charming stories, that the ear was never tired of listening. The old gentleman leant back in his easy chair, and with closed eyes seemed thoroughly to enjoy all his little visitor was telling him.

One day when she had finished, she cried, "I have now told you so many tales, why should you not write them down? I do believe you forget them all! Can't you write them down?"

"To be sure," answered the old gentleman, "of course I can! at least I think so, only I shall never write them down as well as you tell them, and nobody must know whence they come, or that you lie hid in the old trunk; people would all be for coming, and seeing and touching everything with their awkward fingers, and I should have my velvet box quite spoilt!"

"Oh! on no account," chimed in the small princess, "and yet I should like to see their faces when they discovered what was in it!"

"Hush!" said the old gentleman starting up, "there's a knock at the door! Creep back into your nest in the box," and lifting it back into the trunk, presto! down came the lid, and the old hair trunk stood ugly and battered under the gilt mirror, as the housekeeper came up bringing in the tea.

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As she left the room she gave the trunk a sly kick, "You horrid old thing! you very nearly smashed my finger yesterday."

And so these stories came to be written.

THE END.

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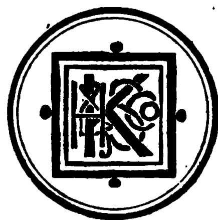

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